

NATIVE COSTUMES OF THE FLATHEAD AND KUTENAI  
INDIAN TRIBES ON THE FLATHEAD INDIAN RESERVATION  
IN MONTANA

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Costumes of primitive peoples have long been a source of interest to the historian and designer alike. The various kinds of body decorations and coverings used by primitive groups is known to reflect their beliefs and customs. Groups of living peoples close to their pre-historic life are becoming rare in the present day civilization. However, it is with two such groups that this study is concerned.

The Flathead and Kutenai Indian nations represented somewhat different cultural patterns, although both were characterized by peacefulness, honor, and industry. When they ceded their beautiful, fruitful lands to the United States, their heads of government voluntarily exchanged their ways of existence for what they deemed was the honor and security offered by the white men's representatives. Unfortunately, the desirable things that had been promised them did not materialize. Little was left for them because the means of continuing their former culture was gone. The obvious course remaining was for them to become an integral part of the "civilization" which surrounded them.

Now, almost all of the native cultural patterns of the Flathead and Kutenai Indian tribes have been lost through their assimilation and intermarriage with the white people. Diffusionary influences from other tribes have also affected their life in this transition period between a primitive existence and full-fledged citizenship of the United States. While some record has been made of various parts of their culture and traditions, little or nothing has been written about their costumes and the significance of these costumes to their

wearers. This study is an effort to make a written and pictorial contribution to the historical records of Montana's first citizens.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Flathead and Kutenai tribes of North American Indians are for the most part consolidated on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Lake County, Montana (Plate I). Culturally, linguistically, and historically they are very different.

### History of the Tribes

In their pre-historic past, the Flatheads lived in earth and branch covered dwellings which were of a permanent type. These were supported by logs with roof rafters, smoke holes, etc. The lodges were communal dwellings housing several branches of a family. From these lodges, the men went out on hunting expeditions, sometimes many weeks in length, to the western edge of the Great Plains. The women remained at home until the tribe acquired horses. After this, the whole family accompanied the men to their hunting grounds, or traveled and traded with the Indians along the Columbia River and Pacific Plains. The Kutenai lived farther north than the Flatheads, although they were nomadic wanderers of the plains and mountains.

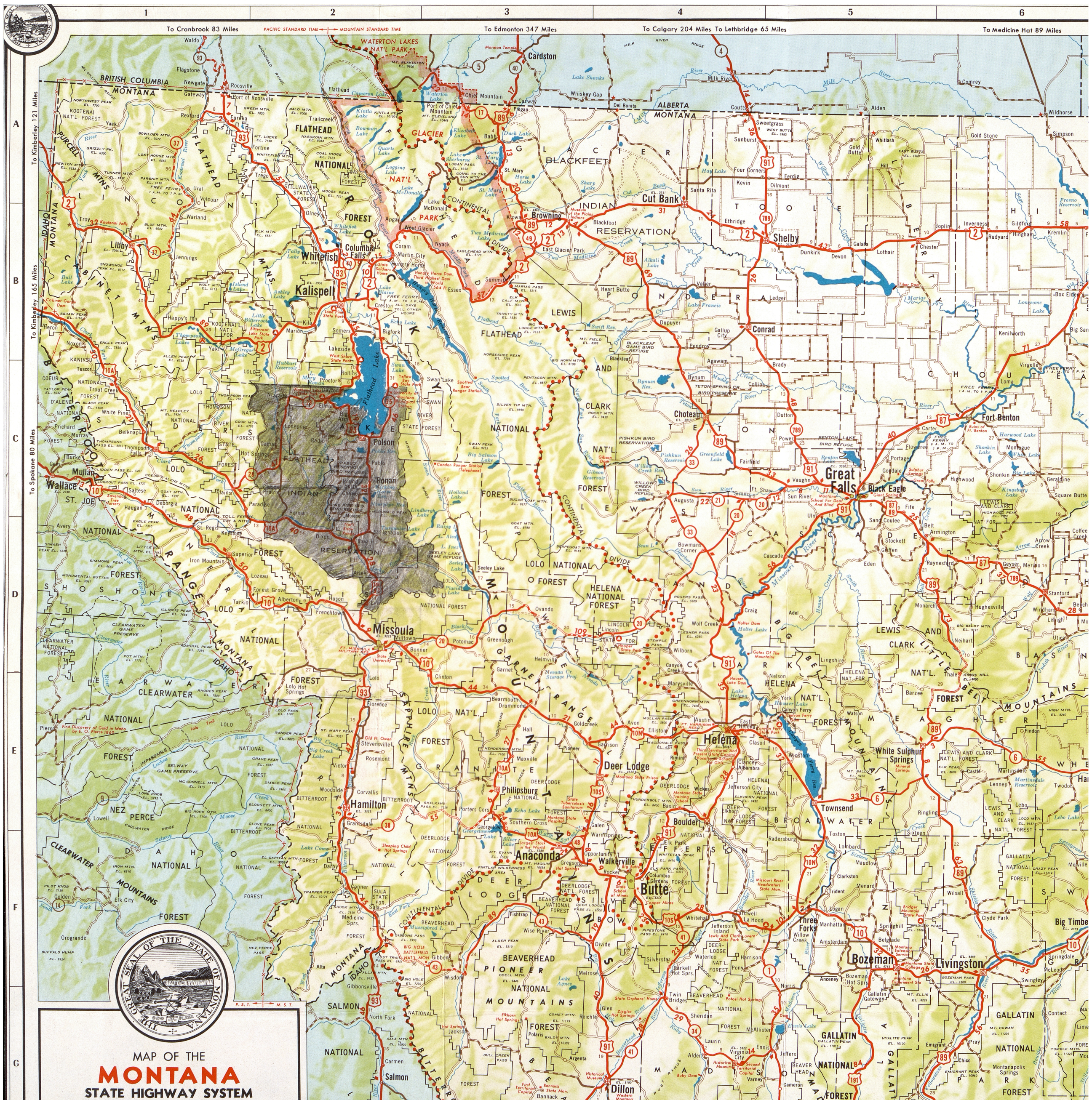
Portable dwellings were necessary for people who moved frequently, and they soon adopted the teepees made of hides, similar to those of the Plains Indians. Each family unit had its own teepee and was

#### EXPLANATION OF PLATE I

The shaded area included on the map locates the approximate coverage of the consolidated Flathead-Kutenai Reservation. Montana State Highway Department map.



## PLATE I





responsible for its transportation. It and all other belongings were carried on a travois attached to the horse (Plate II, Fig. 2). The poles for the carrier were also the teepee poles. Besides possessions, small children, the aged and infirm were transported on the travois.

Cleanliness was an important part of their existence, so the lodges and subsequent teepees were usually located near a stream, river or lake. Close to the shores were built sweat lodges (Plate II, Fig. 1), where the Indians would periodically steam themselves before plunging into the cold waters.

Both Flathead and Kutenai tribes had hunting-fishing-gathering economies whose subsistence was basically and seasonally devoted to hunting buffalo and other wild animals, fishing in the lakes and streams, and gathering wild berries and edible plants. The variety of their cultural patterns and customs is presented well by Turney-High in Ethnography of the Kutenai<sup>1</sup> and The Flathead Indians of Montana.<sup>2</sup>

The Flathead Indians could be divided into six clans or tribes within the Flathead Nation. Two of these are extinct, and the four remaining ones, according to Teit<sup>3</sup> are the Flathead (or Têtes Plattes), the Pend d'Oreilles, Kalispel, and the Spokane. According to a number

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<sup>1</sup>H. H. Turney-High, Ethnography of the Kutenai, American Anthropological Association, Memoir 56, 1941.

<sup>2</sup>H. H. Turney-High, The Flathead Indians of Montana, American Anthropological Association, Memoir 48, 1937.

<sup>3</sup>Teit, The Salishan Tribes of the Western Plateau, 45th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, edited by Franz Boas, 1927-1928.

# EXPLANATION OF PLATE II

- Fig. 1. A sweat house of the type usual among the Flathead Indians, placed close to a stream or lake. Eckley Photo.
- Fig. 2. The travois pulled behind a horse carrying persons and belongings whenever the tribe moved. Eckley Photo.

## PLATE II



Fig. 1.

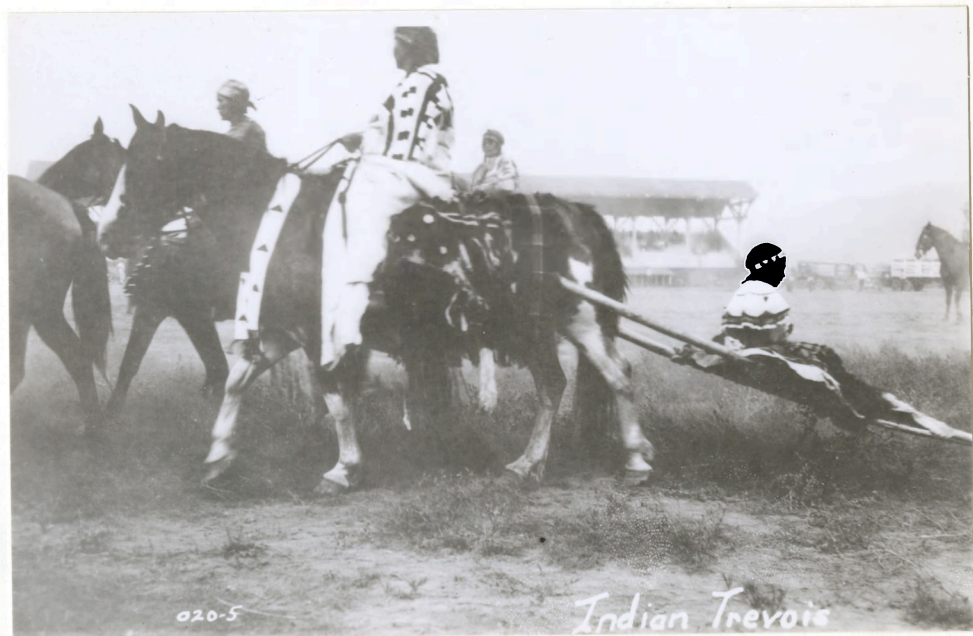


Fig. 2.



of Indian consultants, these were all part of the Colville Indian Mother tribe in "times past".

The Flatheads are referred to by early settlers of Montana as the Salish Indians. The Indians also refer to themselves in this manner. The Pend d'Oreilles were the "Lake" Flatheads. They lived in the areas centered by Flathead Lake and the Idaho Lakes; including Lake Pend d'Oreille. The Pend d'Oreilles were literally the "ear-ring" people, and probably were so named from the fresh water shells they wore in their ears. The Kalispels lived along the lower part of Flathead Lake, and on the Flathead River and other rivers of the area. Part of their main subsistence was the camas root, and since they had access to many camas areas or flats, they were also called the Camas People.

There are many theories as to why the Flathead Indian Nation should be so named. To the knowledge of anyone who has studied or written about them, this is a gross misnomer. Apparently they have never practiced the custom of flattening the head, although some of the Indians on the Pacific coast did. It seems strange that the name should be given to those who do not. However, an explanation might be found in a letter written to the Montana State Historical Library on this subject.<sup>1</sup> The writer stated that he had learned that,

Flathead Lake was first known as "The Flat Waters" and when Indians from one or both of the tribes (Salish and Kutenai) first visited with other tribes, they said they were from "the head of the flat waters".

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<sup>1</sup>P. J. Friday, letter to Montana State Historical Library, June, 1952.

This seems like a more credible explanation than a deliberate mis-association of name and custom.

All of the members of the Flathead group belong to the large section of Northwest tribes who speak the Salishan language in common with Indians on the Pacific Coast and British Columbia.<sup>1</sup> The Kutenai speak a different tongue although it is somewhat similar.

The word Kutenai (or Kootenai, Cootenai, Kootenay, Kutenay), when interpreted, is "deer-blanket", as well as several other meanings. Deer or caribou were their main subsistence, and the hides were used to cover the teepees and for clothing. Variations in the spelling seem to exist because of the white men's endeavors to write the Indian sounds.

Prior to 1800 these Indians had mainly traded with other Indians on the West Coast, or occasionally those to the immediate south, who in turn had had trade with the Spanish in the California area. With the exception of scattered fur traders and explorers, the first known white men to visit the area were Lewis and Clark, who visited the Salish in 1805. They recorded this visit in their journals, along with several comments on the character of the people, customs and dress.<sup>2</sup> From this time on there were increasing numbers of white people in the area. In 1809 David Thompson established Kullyspel House on Lake Pend d'Oreille and Saleesh House (near Thompson Falls, Montana) for the Northwest Fur Company. In 1821 this fur company

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<sup>1</sup>F. W. Hodge, editor, Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico, p. 465.

<sup>2</sup>Merriwether Lewis, History of the Expedition of Lewis and Clark, edited by Elliott Coues, Vol. II, p. 581.

merged with the Hudson Bay Company. In the 1840's, a third trading post was established, Fort Connah, at Post Creek, which is on the present Flathead reservation. These fur trading companies did a thriving business, particularly in beaver skins, till the mid-1840's. At that time men's hats ceased to be made from beaver, and the most profitable trading fur of the Indians became almost worthless.

From some of the early French voyageurs or Iroquois trappers in the area, the Salish Indians heard about the Almighty and omnipotent Great Spirit, about the white men's prayers, and about the Black Robes who could lead the prayers, and teach about the Great Spirit. Their own legends had prepared them for this;<sup>1</sup> they made plans to send for these Black Robes. Three trips were made to St. Louis before they were successful. The third group returned to their nation with the Jesuit Father Pierre Jean De Smet. He established the Catholic mission of St. Mary's at what is now Stevensville, Montana. Due to his labors and those of other pioneer priests who followed him, the Indians built a church, pharmacy, grist mill, and other buildings. In 1854 the mission was moved to St. Ignatius, Montana, where there was also a school established by the Ursuline nuns. This mission at St. Ignatius still furnishes religious training, school, medical care, and great inspiration to these people. Today many of the Indians have discarded their former principles in exchange for the poorest ideals of the white men's way of life. The liquor, laziness, and moral degeneration of this once proud "Nation of Chiefs"<sup>2</sup> are indeed a sad reminder of what

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<sup>1</sup>H. H. Turney-High, The Flatheads of Montana, p. 41-42.

<sup>2</sup>Rev. Peter J. (sometimes Pierre J.) De Smet, S. J., Letters and Sketches, Preface, p. 1.

the white men's civilization has accomplished. The church endeavored to build and teach, but other influences have destroyed the best of the native culture and have been able to substitute nothing but the poorest elements of the white men's culture in exchange.

Early writers seem in agreement that the Salish were outstanding in cleanliness, leadership, moral principles as we know them, and as having great respect for the life, both physical and cultural, of others. It is the proud boast of the tribe, that never, even till today, has a Salish Indian ever harmed a white person. Cox wrote about the Flatheads from 1811-1814 as follows:<sup>1</sup>

Flatheads have fewer failings than any of the tribes I ever met with. They are honest in their dealings, brave in the field, quiet and amenable to their chiefs, fond of cleanliness, and decided enemies to falsehood of every description. The women are excellent wives and mothers and their character for fidelity is so well established that we never heard an instance of one of them proving unfaithful to her husband. They are also free from the vice of backbiting, so common among the lower tribes, and laziness is a stranger among them.

The first priest to the Salish, Father De Smet, wrote about his flock as he first found them in 1841:<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the character of these Indians, it is entirely pacific. They never fight, except in circumstances of lawful defense, but they are, unfortunately, often reduced to this sad necessity, in consequence of the warlike temper of the Black Feet tribe, who are their neighbors and implacable enemies ...their courage is as conspicuous as their love of peace...The greatest reproach that could be made to the Flatheads was their excessive love for games of change, in which they often risked all they possessed...

The government of the nation is confided to chiefs who have merited this title by their experiences and exploits, and who possess more or less influence, according to the degree of wisdom and courage they have displayed in council or battle...I know not of any government where so much personal liberty is united with greater subordination and devotedness.

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<sup>1</sup> Ross Cox, Adventures on the Columbia River. Vol. I, p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. Peter J. De Smet, S. J., Letters and Sketches, p. 285-6.

possess more or less influence, according to the degree of wisdom and courage they have displayed in council or battle...I know not of any government where so much personal liberty is united with greater subordination and devotedness.

They are scrupulously honest in buying and selling. They have never been accused of stealing...Detraction is a vice unknown even amongst the women, and falsehood is particularly odious to them...Quarrels and violent anger are severely punished. Whenever anyone happens to fall into trouble, his neighbors hasten to his aid. The gaiety of their disposition adds a charm to their union. Even the stranger is received as a friend, every tent is open to him, and that which he prefers is considered the most honored.

The Kutenai did not and do not have as high standards as the Flathead Indians, although they were somewhat superior to many of the Indian tribes. Cox says of the Kutenai:<sup>1</sup>

The Cootenais are by no means so warm-hearted towards the whites as their neighbors the Flatheads; but Mr. Montour, who spent some years among them, states that they are strictly honest in all their dealings, and remarkable for their adherence to truth, a virtue, by the bye, of which few Indians can boast. Polygamy is unknown among them.....The greatest cleanliness and neatness are observable about their persons and lodges. They are rather handsome, above the middle size, and, compared with other tribes, remarkably fair. On the whole, we may say of this interesting people, that, in their intercourse with white men, they are rather haughty and reserved; in conversation, candid; in trade, honest; brave in battle; and devotedly attached to each other and their country.

Many of the Kutenai continued to be resentful at the intrusion of the whites into "their" area, forcing them into new patterns and away from their nomadic state. Unfortunately their resentment still is occasionally physical, prodded by cheap alcohol and poor living conditions.

On July 16, 1855, the representatives of the Flathead and Kutenai nations met near the present site of Missoula, Montana, at

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<sup>1</sup> Ross Cox, Adventures on the Columbia River, Vol. II, p. 154-5.

Council Grove, with Governor Isaac Stevens, to sign their first treaty with the United States. They ceded their vast lands, estimated by Stevens at some 14,720,000 acres in exchange for their own "exclusive use and occupancy" of the lands of their choice. This was to be limited to 1,280,000 acres. The Salish did not find the Flathead Lake region acceptable, since their home was the Bitterroot Valley, but they were assured that they would not have to move, and hence signed the treaty. In addition to this restricted land they were also to receive a sum of \$485,600 in "aid, goods, and equipment,"<sup>1</sup> over a period of years. Because of poor administration of the Indian funds on both the local and national level, it is doubtful if the Indians ever received even a large fraction of the promised goods, equipment and training. Their lands were gone and the Indians had lost faith in the "great white father" in Washington, D. C. In 1872, a special expedition was sent from Congress to the Salish Indians desiring them to leave the Bitterroot. Their chief, Charlo, was adamant and said they would stay. James A. Garfield headed the representation which conferred with the Flathead chiefs and drew up the agreement which provided their removal to the Jocko, present Flathead reservation. The second and third chiefs signed their mark in agreement, but Charlo refused. When the report was returned to the Department of the Interior, Charlo's mark had been affixed. Yet Garfield, in his official report, stated that "Charlo refused to sign." And so on the basis of a forged mark, the Flatheads were moved to the Jocko reservation with the Kutenais. Charlo was a broken and bitter chief, betrayed by

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<sup>1</sup> Flathead Treaty. Kappler, Charles J, compiler and editor, Indian Affairs, Laws, and Treaties.

those whom he had sought for guidance in the past. Yet in spite of this, the tribe has continued to be more than loyal, more than reliable. If the Flathead's code of behavior had not regarded honesty so highly, or deception as a loathsome type of trick practiced by their enemies, the Blackfeet, the attitude of the United States perhaps could have been understood. The Bitterroot Valley is a choice place of fertility --the Flathead region is not readily cultivated. Surely this great loss of trust in their adopted government has influenced the Indians in their failing to adapt themselves to agriculture and other trades suggested by the Indian agents.

#### Present Conditions

The present economic and moral conditions of the Flathead and Kutenai tribes are not the best. There is a tremendous range within the groups, particularly, the Flathead. Those who have taken advantage of the education, training and tax-free grants of land and cattle breeding, have gained until financially and every other way they are the equal of their white counterparts. Those who have not, for reason of native pride, ignorance, or stubbornness, have suffered from the exploitation they have received. Still others have been educated well, or have distinguished themselves in war or other fields, yet have preferred to live in drunken squalor which combines the worst degeneration of white and red cultures.

The Kutenai were never noted for their ingenuity, and they have simply continued to live as nearly like their ancestors did as was

convenient. Their tribe is divided between three reservations, the Flathead-Kutenai in Montana, the one near Bonner's Ferry, Idaho, and one in Canada. The smallest section of their population is on the Flathead reservation.

There are no exact statistics available for population comparisons, but it is definitely a fact that during the 1700's and 1800's the ranks of these tribes were greatly depleted in wars against the Blackfeet. Between then and the present many have married whites, and today there are comparatively few remaining full-blooded Salish Indians on the reservation. Most remaining full-bloods are Kutenai. The Flatheads have a light complexion, much finer quality hair than other Indians, and features which are not always associated with their Indian ancestry. These factors have speeded their assimilation into the patterns of culture they see around them.

The reservation was opened for homesteading in 1910.<sup>1</sup> At present there are 632,516 acres remaining on tribal rolls. Many of these are acres of forested mountain area, unsuitable for maintaining life of any kind.

Another piece of legislation which has greatly influenced the Indians is the removal of bans on their obtaining liquor through legitimate channels, namely bars, saloons, liquor stores, etc. It was hoped that if they could legally obtain their liquor that they would also develop a personal sense of responsibility for themselves and their behavior. Before 1953 they had bought it surreptitiously in alleys or through white "go-betweens". Unfortunately, the new policy

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<sup>1</sup> Flathead Indian Reservation Acts, Washington; Government Printing Office, 1914.



has not worked out, and the situation has become one of the recognized problems of tribal government. Dr. Leslie Fiedler, at the Indian Affairs meeting at Montana State University in March, 1956, pointed this out to Indian leaders from all over Montana by saying that the young people had to make the decision which would influence all Indian-White relationships, whether they would enter society by the school door or the saloon door. The Indian Affairs Institute which has met annually for ten years on the Montana State University campus is endeavoring to study and plan for the future of the Indians. Representatives from tribes all over Montana, many of them former enemies, meet, listen to specialists, both Indian and white, analyze their problems, and participate in discussions on furthering their best interests.

It would seem that the Indians are in a perplexing limbo between the old and adopted civilization. The young people who have become part of the new are refusing to remember or learn about the old. Most of those who live near or work with them seem to feel that in order to be successful the Indian must discard all his former culture, even an appreciation for the best of its crafts and legends. Naturally there are exceptions to this attitude.

#### TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS AFFECTING COSTUMES

From today's viewpoint, there are several customs or traditions which assume special significance in relationship to a study of costumes. Some are customs which explain the way of life practiced by the Indians, others explain why there are so few old costumes within the tribes.

There are two customs which specifically have served to deplete the number of traditional costumes available for study. One is the ceremony of the funeral feast. At the death, or shortly thereafter, of an Indian, his relatives hold a feast. To it are invited all his friends, neighbors and acquaintances. The men gather in a center circle or area, and the women in an outer area. Various men of the group rise and extoll the dead man's virtues. Between the speeches there is much weeping and wailing. At the end of the oratory, everyone eats. It is not unusual for two beefs to be roasted for one feast. The "success" of a funeral is gauged by how much food there is and how much everyone can take home with him when it is over. After the feast proper, one respected person, not related to the deceased and supposedly impartial, gives away all the worldly goods belonging to the dead person. If the survivors are so inclined they give or buy additional goods to be given away to the guests at the feasts. Even in the last few years, a family which does not do this is rather scorned as being "cheap" by the other Indians. The clothing is divided, of course, and frequently goes to persons who have no real sentimental feeling about it. These people have in turn traded it or sold it. During the depression and before World War II most of the fine examples of handicraft were sold to local merchants or tourists for groceries and supplies. In turn, the costumes have become part of private or museum collections scattered all over the United States.

Many of the choicest pieces have left the reservation as a result of another custom. The Indians, even in times before the white men came, had a pow-wow or "get-together" with their friends at least once

a year. The purpose of these was trade and visiting. For instance, they traded horses or skins for baskets and bags which the Nez Perce wove. At this same meeting they usually had some dances. These "pleasure" dances were much different than those for war or ceremonies. As part of the dance it was customary to have one or several "special numbers" where a squaw or brave could ask a member of the other tribe to dance with him or her. At the conclusion, the person who had "asked" gave the chosen partner a gift. This gift dance was continued until a few years ago. It was responsible for depleting the supply of handicraft articles because an Indian never gives the least valuable of his possessions. The most acceptable gift is the best he has.

Montana does not have a particularly mild climate. For that reason, the skin robes and clothing of the Indians were a vital link to his whole life. Two other ancient customs record the importance of this fact. When a man went into council it was customary to remove the moccasins or foot covering as a symbol that if he lied in council then he might walk forever barefoot. If newcomers entered the camp for trade or protection, then as a symbol of goodwill before going into council the newcomers were covered with the finest skin robes that the Indians had, to show that the guests were welcome there to the best that could be provided. The robes did not usually constitute a gift, however.

The Flatheads did not molest the dead they had killed or found as did some tribes. Neither did they steal the clothing, so there was little acquisition of other costumes by that method.

Traditions held a place of great importance in the lives of these primitive peoples, but their dress, as other phases of their culture, changed through association with groups outside their native habitat.

#### PREPARATION OF SKINS USED FOR CLOTHING

The traditional clothing of the Flathead and Kutenai Indians was made of tanned hides. These hides were from animals they hunted for food as well as for the skins, animals common in their mountain area, including mountain sheep, deer, elk, caribou (for the Kutenai), moose, bear and bison. Smaller animal hides were utilized for trimming or small articles such as mittens. These animals included beaver, otter, weazel and rabbit. The bison, bear, mountain sheep, and other heavy hides were used for heavy duty purposes such as lodge covers; lighter skins like deer and elk were used for clothing.

To prepare the hide was the woman's work, although the men skinned the animal after killing it. On the hunt the men would immediately remove the hide and dress the meat. To do this they would slit the skin on the inner side of each leg. Then a long cut was made the length of the dorsal section where the hide was thinnest and softest. The hide was then removed and the animal cut up.

The entire dressing and tanning took many hours and much labor. The tools were primitive but effective. The cutting knives used were flint; the scraper to remove the hair was made from a buffalo rib. This was hook-shaped at the end which enabled the worker to lash a sharp stone tool on to the hook with a rawhide thong for more

efficient removal of the fur. The other tool was a flesher to remove and make even the underside of the hide. Since some hides were prepared with the fur on, this implement was used more often than the rib. The flesher was made from an elk or deer horn or antler, and consisted of the rounded section. It was somewhat adze-shaped, and the rounded side was the one used to do the scraping.

When the hides were returned to the camp after the hunt, women set to work preparing them. The first step was to soak them in water to remove excess or loose hair. Next they were stretched on a pole frame, either square or triangular, and the frame leaned against a tree where the skin could dry. When the skin was dry the fur side, if the hair was to be removed, was coated with a mixture of intestines, brains, and spoiled eggs. Turney-High<sup>1</sup> reports that his informants said that the first solution was composed of wild rhubarb, horse manure, and water. This was allowed to dry and grease mixed with dry liver rubbed into the hair. Then a solution of brains and water was applied. In any case, this mixture served to loosen the hair, and it also encouraged the birds to pull the hair out. The hides, dried in the sun on a frame, were then immersed in running water. The faster the movement of the water the better, because it meant more thorough cleaning. Again the hides were stretched and dried. Then the tool to remove the hair was used by grasping it with both hands on the end opposite the hooked effect, and working it like a hoe to pull out the hair. Women usually stood bent over for this process. When the

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<sup>1</sup>H. H. Turney-High, Ethnography of the Kutenai, p. 80.

scraping was as good as they could get it, the hide was returned to the water and again stretched and dried.

The underside was worked with the flesher till the hide was even and smooth. For this process the woman knelt and again worked toward herself. After this the hide was once more soaked and dried. At this point it was stiff, white, semi-transparent, and appeared smaller than it actually was because of shrinkage. From then on the hide was worked by rubbing it between the knuckles and kneading it constantly till the hide became soft as chamois.

The Kutenai prided themselves on their fine white skins, so for them, with the exception of the hides used for moccasins, the process ended here. The Flathead's were more inclined to use white buckskin for dress occasions only, and smoke all the others at least a little.

Smoking the hides darkened them to a tan or light brown. It also acted as a preservative which prevented their becoming stiff when wet or damp. Unsmoked skins which have become wet must be treated according to the original process of preparation. First they are wet; when dried, they are stiff; finally they must be re-kneaded.

To smoke hides, a frame was assembled like that used for their bath house. Sapling willow poles were bent into a half-globular frame of one and one-half to three feet in diameter over a pit dug down about a foot. Under this frame a smudge fire was built. The Salish used sagebrush and green cedar bark for their smudges. The Kalispel and Fend d'Orielle used cedar bark, animal chips and other things which burn slowly and smudge, rather than flame. The Kutenai used deer chips and rotted stump wood to smoke their hides. Indian-smoked

leather has an unmistakable odor or fragrance, depending upon how it affects the person smelling it. Great care was taken during the smoking process to see that the skins were not over-cooked or scorched. Several hides were usually laid on the frame at once and rotated so they all eventually came in direct contact with the smoke. The smoke was the important agent, not the heat.

Hides to be used with the fur on were fleshed and laid over a pole braced against a tree. This pole was a straight young sapling from which the bark had been stripped till it was perfectly smooth. The hide was rubbed over this till it was soft and pliable. On some occasions the hide was stretched after the fleshing and worked with a stone tool which was rather pestle-like.

#### SEWING EQUIPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE

Before the costumes themselves are considered, a brief statement about the sewing equipment might be helpful. With the exception of real bone needles mentioned by Turney-High<sup>1</sup> in relation to the Kutenai's all but forgotten basketry art, there is no record of a needle with an eye used in sewing. Rather, the joining of all seams was accomplished by piercing the leather with a bone awl. The fine pointed bone from the foreleg of the deer was the one generally used. This bone was usually put into a wooden handle for easy handling. Then the sinew thread was poked through the pierced hole. The sinew came from the tendons in the neck of the deer or elk. Other animals do not have

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<sup>1</sup>H. H. Turney-High, Ethnography of the Kutenai, p. 76.

tendons of sufficient length. These sinews were dried and then were separated into individual fibers. They become pliable when dampened, so the women often drew them through their mouths to soften them slightly, which was generally all that was necessary. The bone awl and sinew were usually carried in a small buckskin bag with the woman's personal possessions.

The most common stitch which was used is one resembling the whipping, overcasting, or overhanding stitch. It is a stitch which appears to be done on the diagonal and joins two edges with a slight ridge. If the sinew is not pulled tight, the edges lie flush together. They undoubtedly must have had other stitches for joining seams, but this one was by far the most common. Ewers lists four main stitches used in Blackfoot clothing construction<sup>1</sup> but these are uncommon in Kutenai and Flathead garment construction.

#### WOMEN'S COSTUMES

The place of the woman in a primitive society is a subordinate one, yet it is important because it is complementary to the man's. A complete distribution of tasks exists between the sexes. The woman prepared food and provided the vegetable and fruit elements. She was responsible for preparing the hides, making use of them, and maintaining them. The children were in her complete charge till their education became specialized by sex; the girls continued to be hers to teach. She cared for her husband's needs with pride and pleasure

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<sup>1</sup> John C. Ewers, Blackfeet Crafts, Indian Handicraft #9.



because he fought the enemy and wild animals and was responsible for bringing home meat for the household. If he should fail, then she cared for him with compassion and gentleness because he was dependent upon her.

### Design of Women's Dress

The garments worn by women were utilitarian, usually slightly decorated for good luck or sheer love of beauty. The main body garment was a poncho-style dress made of two full skins (Plate III). The dress was thus much like those worn by other women of Plains tribes. It retained the basic shape of the hide. The sewing connecting the front and back hides was done between the waist area and the bottom. The underarm seam to the waist was open. This was practical because the woman had only to twist her dress slightly to have her breast free for nursing the baby. At the same time, this looseness about the top enabled her to have wide free arm movements for her work.

The woman readily adapted and changed this basic dress with the white man's coming so as to be "in fashion". An early description of her change in garb is presented by Cox in his Adventures on the Columbia River from 1811-1814.<sup>1</sup> He is describing the first wedding of a Flathead girl to a white man, a fur trader who had distinguished himself on the Indian's behalf. The girl was the niece of the hereditary chief. He says,

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<sup>1</sup> Ross Cox, Adventures on the Columbia River, Vol. I, p. 257.

### EXPLANATION OF PLATE III

- Fig. 1. The hide of an animal, usually a deer, cut into three main pieces to make half a poncho-style dress or shirt.
- Fig. 2. The completed poncho dress with the letters a, b, c, corresponding to its part of the hide in Fig. 1.

## PLATE III

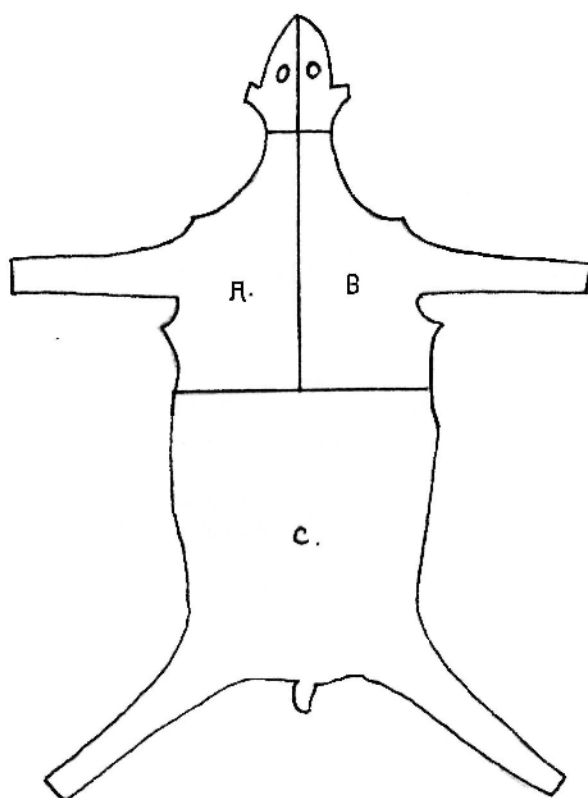


Fig. 1.

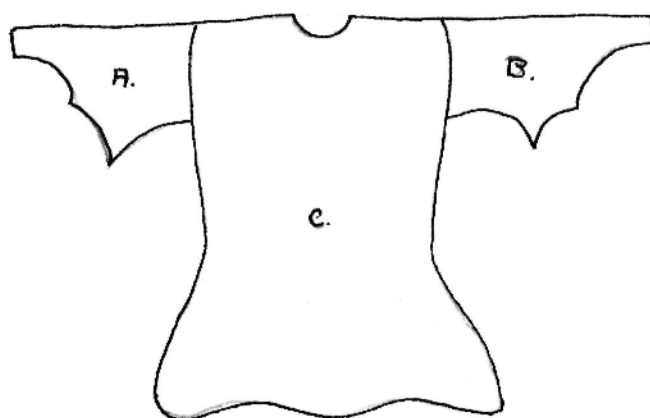


Fig. 2.

The happy Pierre presented a gun to her uncle, some cloth calico, and ornaments to her female relatives with a pistol and handsome dagger to his friend. He proceeded in the evening to the chief's lodge, where a number of her friends had assembled to smoke. Here she received a lecture from the old man, her mother, and a few other ancients on her duty as wife and mother. They strongly exhorted her to be chaste, obedient, industrious, and silent; and when absent with her husband among her tribes, always to stay at home and have no intercourse with strange Indians. She then retired with the old woman to an adjoining hut, where she underwent an ablution and bade adieu to her buckskin chemise, the place of which was supplied by one of gingham to which was added a calico and green cloth petticoat and a gown of blue cloth.

This Indian exchange of the single garment of buckskin for two of cotton persists to the present time among older women. The underdress is long, loose, and has sleeves which are gathered around or slightly above the wrist. The overdress is a poncho-type style very similar in construction to the buckskin dress (Plate IV). The underarm seam and the sleeves are open to the waist. The neck is high and slit only enough to allow the head to go through. The double dresses are made from cotton cloth in different brilliant colors and patterns. Other than the simplicity of the outer dress style, these dresses do not resemble the older ones made of skin. For decorative purposes, the Indian women have simulated the weight of buckskin by using a heavy velveteen or velour. These dresses, worn for "state" occasions such as tribal dances, are made from the pattern for the outer poncho cotton dress and decorated as if they were buckskin. Warm jewel-like colors have seemed to be the preference. These are worn without the underdress since the fabric is heavy and opaque.

#### EXPLANATION OF PLATE IV

**Fig. 1.** The flat pattern for a cotton poncho dress showing the simplicity of its pieces.

**Fig. 2.** The completed appearance of the cotton poncho dress.

## PLATE IV

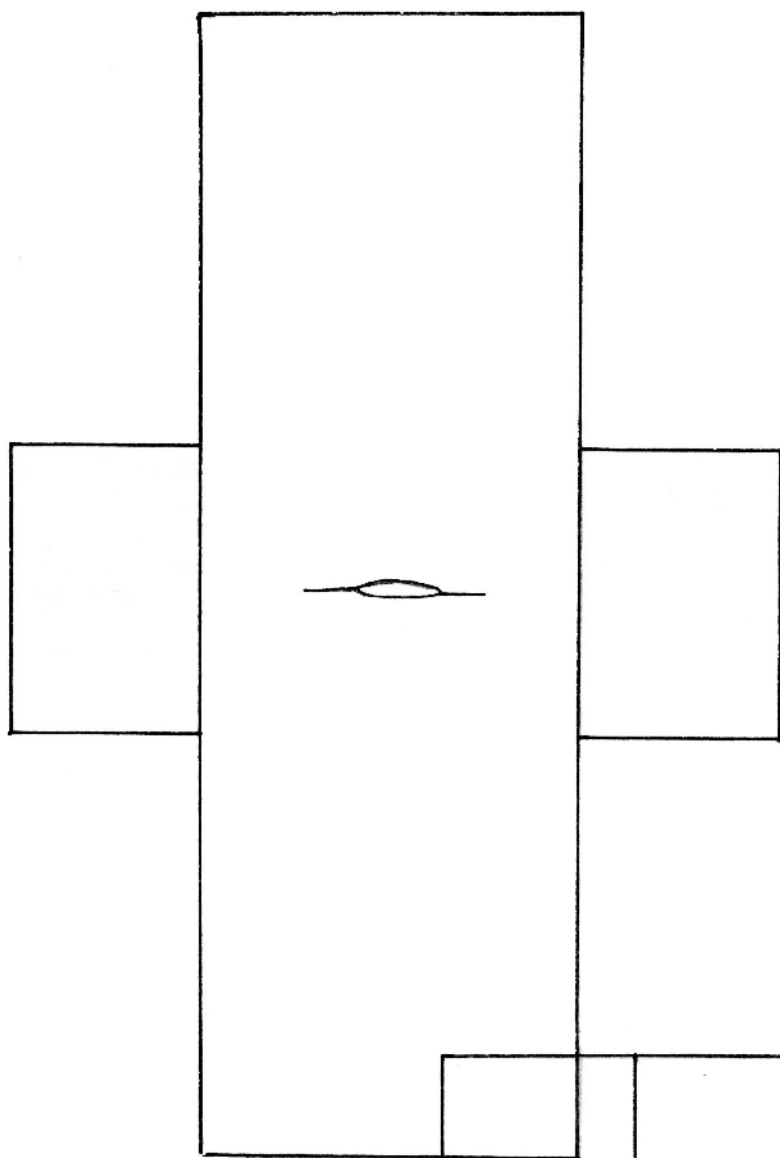
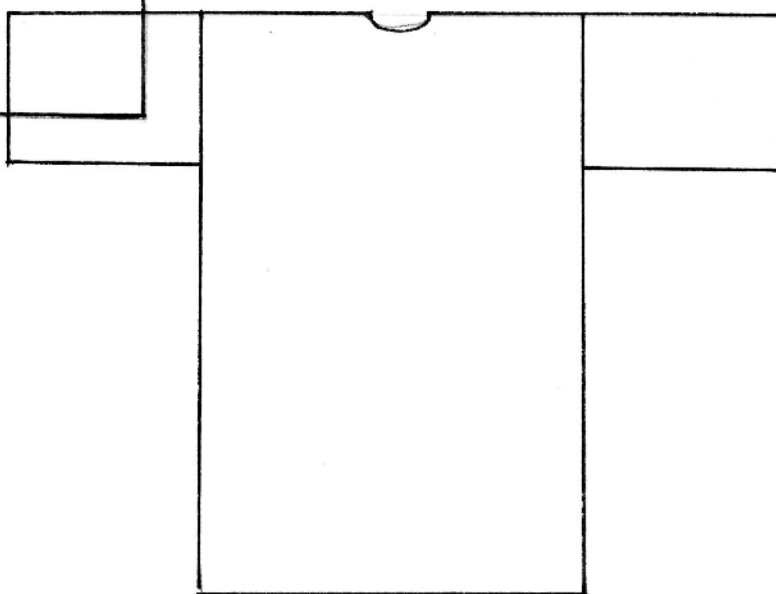


Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.



#### EXPLANATION OF PLATE V

A cotton poncho dress worn by an Indian woman as she prepares supper. Note the two dresses and the tying of the kerchief. McKay photo.

PLATE V





### Decoration of Women's Costumes

Decoration of the buckskin dresses varied greatly between the Flathead and Kutenai groups. The former decorated their garments much as did the Blackfeet and some other Western Plains tribes, with porcupine quill embroidery in various hues. The quill embroidery was done with two to five-inch quills taken from a freshly dead porcupine. When the time came to use the quills, the end which had been rooted in the animal was pinched off. Then the quills were dyed with various natural dyes. The method was to dampen the dye plant in water, to put the quills on top of the plant or other dye source, to wrap this together in a tight bundle, and to sleep on it overnight. Some of the natural dyes and their sources are: yellow from pine tree lichens, red from berries, red roots; green from green grass, blue from duck manure. The Indians soon discovered the "running" qualities of trading cloth, and boiled strips of these cheap cottons to use the liquid as dye. The central channel of the quill absorbed the dye much as hair does. More quills were dyed at a time than would be needed. These were stored in the small buckskin bag with the awl and sewing sinew.

To use the quills, the woman would dampen them in her mouth to make them pliable. After the quill had been flattened between her teeth, she would commence to embroider with it, using one of several methods. She would start by laying the quill flat and stitching over one end. The quill would remain flat for the distance needed in the design. Then, before it was bent back, a second stitch was taken to

anchor it. The quill was bent or folded over toward the original line of stitching where another stitch would be taken close to the first. The process of stitching and bending continued until the length of the quill was completely used. Variations in quill embroidery resulted from the varying angles at which the fold was made, as well as from the distance between folds.

Quill embroidery usually was used in solid areas. Because of its nature, the designs were usually quite geometrical. Some of the types of embroidery stitches are shown in Plate VI. Two rows of sinew stitching were used. One row held the top and another, the bottom.

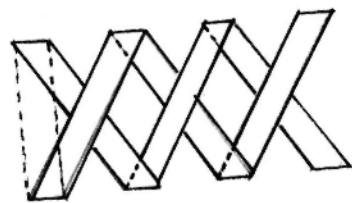
The age of "post-trader" (after the white men came) garments is often determined by their decoration. Beads were accepted as a substitute for quills almost at once, although quill embroidery continued to be done by a few persons. The first beads brought by the traders were large glass and china beads from Italy. These were used only in necklaces. The first "trade beads" were over one-fourth inch in diameter. These were both monochrome and patterned beads. There were also irregular china beads about the same size in light blue, medium blue, pale green, light red and black. These were often combined with a brass bead of similar size sometimes called "iron beads".

The next bead period was that of the "real bead". These were the first ones used for embroidery purposes. They were smaller than the previous beads and larger than seed beads, about one-eighth inch in diameter. Common colors were light blue, dark blue, dark red, deep yellow, white and black. These were the first ones sold by the hank.

#### EXPLANATION OF PLATE VI

Four types of typical porcupine quill embroidery stitches.  
The dotted lines represent the direction of the quill on the  
underneath or back side of the stitch. When completed, the  
stitches are close together and appear solid.

## PLATE VI



The "real beads" were used in designs similar to the quill work, geometric figures or bands of the embroidery beads.

"Seed beads" were introduced about 1875. They were the smallest beads used and would have been impossible to use without fine thread and steel needles. These were glass or china beads, the largest of which was about one-sixteenth inch in diameter. They were somewhat irregular in shape, and opaque.

About 1895-1900 some large transparent glass beads were introduced. These were called Belgium beads or basket beads, and were about three-sixteenths inch in diameter and from one-sixteenth to one-half inch long.

To embroider with beads the Indians again used two threads. On one they strung the beads, and with the other the bead-string was stitched down. Flathead stitching was distinctive because the anchor stitch was usually between each bead. In some other tribes a space of four or five beads was allowed before an anchor stitch was taken. The Indian woman tried to get an extra thickness of cloth or paper to back the buckskin while she embroidered with the beads. This acted as a stiffener and helped to hold the design in place while she worked on it. When possible the embroidery was made on a piece separate from the garment. This is particularly true of decorated areas if they are fairly large, such as yokes or shoulder bands. After they are made, then they are attached to the apparel. In this way the embroidery could be used again and again by being removed from a worn out garment and transferred to a new one. This applied whether

the garment was of hide or cloth. The cloth used was in a variety of colors and was usually a wool flannel.

After the missionaries came, they encouraged the Indians to use their seemingly natural flair for design to make patterns other than geometric ones. One of their most beloved priests had once been an artist in Italy, and as a result, much of the floral work has a certain flavor reminiscent of church carvings and Renaissance paintings (Plate VII).

The Indians also embroidered animal designs in their bead work. These were done because of their spirit's direction, or because they wanted to have qualities like the animal portrayed. These designs were embroidered free hand without drawing them first or having any pattern. The men dictated their wishes to their women in this matter, since most animal or commemorative designs were for the men.

In addition to quill and bead embroidery, and beads strung on fringe, plain fringe, elk teeth and various shells were used as decoration. The elk teeth were used either in a central location, or anchored about the garment in a manner resembling polka dots. The shells were a form of monetary exchange used by Pacific Coast Indians and were obtained in trade with them. This was particularly true of the dentilium shells, called "Haiqua" by Cox in his writing.<sup>1</sup> He describes them thus:

Haiqua which I have so often mentioned is a white round shell of extreme hardness, varying from one to four inches in length and from three eighths to half an inch in circumference.

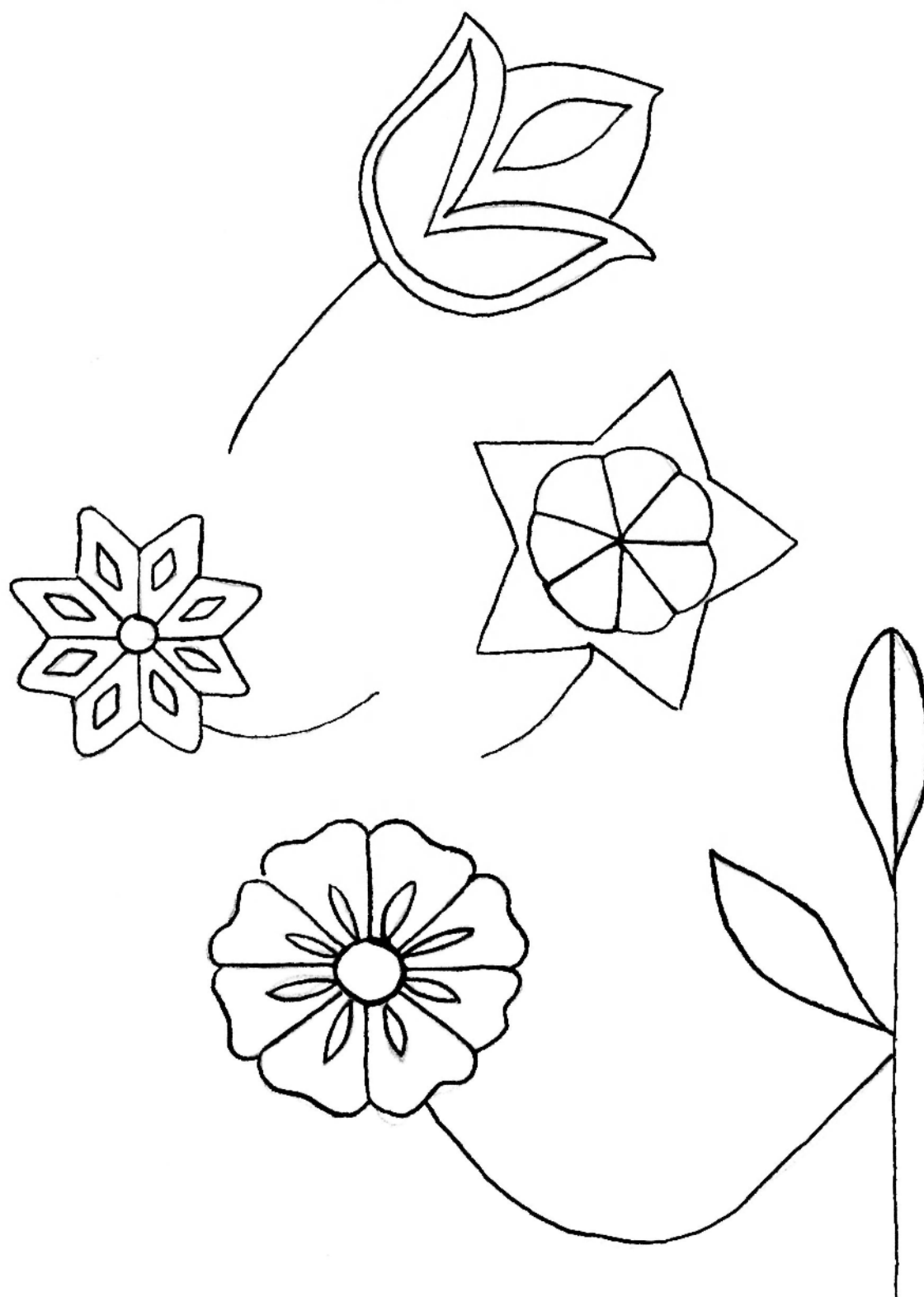
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<sup>1</sup> Ross Cox, Adventures on the Columbia River, p. 332-333.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VII

Floral designs similar to those found in some Salish bead embroidery.

PLATE VII





It is hollow, slightly curved, and tapers a little towards the ends. These shells are highly estimated, the longest being the most valuable. They are found in the neighborhood of Nootka, and form an important part of local traffic. The Indians regulate the prices of their various articles by haiqua; a fathom of the best description being equal in value to ten good beaver skins.

Another, and more common shell was the sea snail shell often used to string on thongs hanging from the yoke.

Metal thimble bells were often used, too, after the advent of the trader. These were small pieces of metal bent into the form of a bell, such a shape as might be considered for a cow bell, but infinitely smaller and without a clapper. Hawk bells were also obtained by trading.

The decorated areas on a woman's dress would probably be centered mainly around the top. Usually it consisted of an embroidered yoke and in the older dresses there were also sleeve bands. These pieces were the length of the shoulder seam and covered it. Decoration such as fringe or lengths of shells and trade beads strung on thongs hung from the bottom of the yoke. These yokes were balanced in weight for front and back, but the designs were different. It was considered bad luck to have them the same. It would also have been boring to work so long on two like designs.

The skirt could be decorated with single or double pieces of fringe or with elk teeth. The fringe would be tied through the hide of the dress or knotted and stitched down. It was arranged in rows, usually two, in the bottom area of the skirt. The thongs were separated from the next ones by five to seven inches. The effect was not overly conspicuous.

#### EXPLANATION OF PLATE VIII

Typical bands of beaded embroidery. The color arrangement and choice is that of the widow of Chief Anaes of the Lower Kutenai. The dress is now owned by Mrs. Ethyl Terry, Polson, Montana.

PLATE VIII



The Kutenai scorned this variety of decoration used by the Flathead Indians till about the turn of the century. Before this they maintained that the whiteness of their skins trimmed with lengths of white thong fringe was decoration enough. Their garments were most distinctive because of the restraint in the use of color and the extravagant use of such quantities in the one kind of decoration. The fringe on a woman's garment might be under the arms, on the side seams, at the yoke area across the front, or tied in single strands around the skirt in bands like the Flathead dresses. The winter wrap or robe of the woman was originally an additional hide finished with the fur on. This robe was wrapped around the body like a cape or blanket. So indeed it was a natural step to accept the blankets in exchange for the robe. During all seasons it became the custom to wear either the blanket or a shawl. These shawls were introduced to the Indians about 1860, at a time when fashionable women on the East Coast were wearing shawls. Like their sisters in fashion, the Indian women insisted upon fringe. The paisley or flowered designs from India were also popular. For those who couldn't afford these or hadn't access to them, the Indian women decorated their own plain colored shawls with large areas of solid bead embroidery, usually in floral designs. They were somewhat particular about color as is shown from the following quotation of a letter from their first local Indian agent, Major Owen, to his superior administrator, Geary. Apparently this letter also acknowledges the official beginning of the wearing of shawls.

(104) Office Flathead Agency  
Fort Owen June 30" 1860

Sir

In compliance with the regulations of the Ind Dept. I herewith have the honor to Submit this My annual report for 1859 after My return last June with the delegation of Chiefs that Visited you I made Known to the Flathead Nation that the treaties Made with them by Gov. I. I. Stevens were at last ratified but that Nothing Would be done during this Year "1859" But that I hoped to be able to commence operations at an Early day during the present Year "1860". On reaching My agency careful Estimates were Made out and forewarded to your office setting forth the articles Most desireable to these Indians also an Estimate for tools for the contemplated shops and Machinery and Building Materials for the Mills and agency buildings to be Erected this Summer. I deeply regret the Dept Not having Sent by Way of the Mo river the Machinery Building Material and Tools absolutely required as the Expense of transportation is More than double from this side of the continent compared to that from the other or by way of the Mo river to Fort Benton. Many of the Articles purchased by the Dept on the Eastern Side for the Flathead Indians are Seriously objectionable and I doubt very Much Wether the Indians will receive them as part payment of the 1st installment due them. The property was purchased and shipped Without the consent of the Indians being asked or obtained The 650 prs Blue Blkts 120dz Shawls Tons of Rice Hard bread and coffee will be of No Manner of use to them whatever The objection to the Blkt is the Colour. The Shawls are Never used and as for the Hard Bread the Indians and settlers in the Bitter Root Valley and Vicinity Will and can raise a Sufficient quantity of Wheat to Make flour plenty for the Wants of a whole country. In addition to which they Enjoy the privilege of cooking it to Suit their own tastes Had a large amt of the invoice been invested in Stock Say Am. Mares and heifers and given to the Indians it would Not only have pleased them but would have redounded Much More to their common good (105) after the delay of Five Years Now to force upon the Flathead Nation some \$25000.00 Worth of property (Eastern Cost) Without their concent hardly seems fair to the unprejudiced Mind I am Satisfied that they will Make Serious objections....<sup>1</sup>

The shawls were worn around the shoulders in winter or inclement weather, but in summer they were folded in half and worn around the waist by wrapping them around and tucking the corner under the fold at

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<sup>1</sup>Major John Owen, Journals and Letters of Major John Owen, p. 214.

the waist. The habit of wearing the shawls lasted until late in the twentieth century. For tribal dances and get-togethers, the shawl is often the only reminder of their former costume.

Apparently the women were consistently bareheaded until the traders introduced scarves or kerchiefs to them. These were silk square similar to the peasant head scarves. However, rather than being worn tied under the chin, they were wrapped and tied over the head somewhat like a "backward" turban. The scarf was folded in half diagonally and the center placed across the brow. The ends were then crossed in the back over the corners and brought back to knot in front. The back corners were then folded up under the tie ends. In this fashion the scarf was securely tied onto the head.

Women's moccasins were not as interesting as those for men because they were not decorated so highly. Therefore, the complete discussion of moccasins will be under the description of men's clothing. It will suffice to say that the women's moccasins were the standard design of one-seam moccasin for their tribe. Low moccasins were worn in summer, and in winter a wrapping or leg piece was attached to the foot moccasin. Dress moccasins often had the leg-piece decorated. This was laced on the leg above the moccasin (Plate IX).

The accessories worn by a woman were rather simple. Almost always she wore a belt with her dress, whether the dress was of buckskin or cotton. These belts were usually decorated. Such a belt often had two tails or long end appendages which hung directly down the front of the dress. Early belts lacked buckles and were fastened with thongs strung through holes in the ends of the belt. In the

EXPLANATION OF PLATE IX

Grand-daughter of Flathead sub-chief Pablo shown in full dress regalia. The photo was probably taken about 1920. Photographer unknown.

PLATE IX





mid-1800's the traders introduced heavy leather belts to the Indians, and also nailheads to decorate the belts. Many used the nailheads, and a few did some beadwork on them. Since the belts were about the weight of razor-strap leather, it was exceptionally hard to work a fine bead needle through. As a result, the beads were attached with a "lazy stitch". That is, many beads were strung on a thread before an anchor stitch was taken. Sometimes several inches of beads would be strung before the stitch would be taken to hold them in place. Refer to Plate X for a photograph showing a nailhead-trimmed woman's belt and a man's belt with the lazy stitch beading. The Kutenai women usually wore an untrimmed belt or buckskin band.

During early periods pre-trader and the first half of the nineteenth century, women's bags were limited in type to simple utilitarian ones for carrying their possessions. Examples would include the draw-string bag for sewing equipment, and the large folded case of hide called a "par flesche" to carry the large belongings such as excess clothing. Another par flesche might hold dried meat, berries, and roots. Bags such as are known today, which serve as purses, came into use at a later time. They are various in size from ones a foot square to small coin purses. These were usually open at the top and had two buckskin handles. One or both sides would be completely covered with beaded embroidery.

Necklaces and bracelets varied with the wealth and disposition of the individual. Probably the most common necklaces before the trader's beads, were made of elk teeth, sea snail shells, or wampum. The "wampum" or money among the Flathead Indians were pieces of small

#### EXPLANATION OF PLATE X

Nailhead trimmed woman's belt at rear with two narrow leather pieces to hang down the front of a dress. Other belt has belt bag attached for carrying currency and valuables. The latter is a man's belt and shows the bias blue bead band on the edge. Photo taken by courtesy of Montana State University Historical Museum.

## PLATE X



hollow bones cut in sections about one-eighth to one-fourth inch in length. These rings were white to cream colored and were strung on buckskin. If her husband were wealthy a woman might have several strings. Each string she wore would be slightly longer so that the length of the several strings appeared to be one which was graduated. Some women as well as men wore earrings. These were usually made of fresh water clam shells which had particular color or iridescence. Some apparently attached them to their ears with a buckskin loop over the ear. After metal was available many Indians pierced their ear lobes and wore decorations in their ears by means of a sinew thread or the wires which the white people introduced. This practice of wearing earrings was particularly prevalent among the Pend d'Oreille tribe, and was followed by children as well as adults. This custom persists to the date of this paper.

#### MEN'S COSTUMES

War and hunting, the main elements of an Indian man's life, required that he wear functional clothing. So his costume was variable; it was adaptable to weather, occupation, and personal whim.

Lewis and Clark, sent by President Jefferson to see what made up the newly acquired Louisiana Purchase, explored it thoroughly, and recorded facts about the lands and people they met on their journey. They arrived in the Flathead area on September 4, 1805. Because they were the first company of white men to know this tribe, their impressions are of the group as they were, uninfluenced by outside white

sources. This is part of their journal entry for the date of their arrival and the day following:<sup>1</sup>

In the wide valley at their junction, we discovered a large camp of Indians. When we received them and alighted from our horses, we were received with great cordiality. A council was immediately assembled, white robes were thrown over our shoulders, and the pipe of peace was introduced. After this ceremony it was too late to go any further, we camped and continued smoking and conversing with the chiefs to a late hour.

On September 5, they wrote:

This camp consists of thirty-three lodges, in which were about four hundred souls, among whom eighty were men. They are called Ootlashoots and represent themselves as one band of a nation called Tushepaws, a numerous people of four hundred fifty lodges, residing on the heads of the Missouri and Columbia rivers, and some of them lower down the latter river. In person these Indians are stout, and their complexion is lighter than that common among Indians. The hair of the men is worn in cues of otter-skin falling in front over the shoulders. A shirt of dressed skin covers the body to the knee, and on this is worn occasionally a robe. To these are added leggings and moccasins. The women suffer their hair to fall in disorder over the face and shoulders, and their chief article of covering is a long shirt of skin reaching down to the ankles and tied around the waist. In other respects, as also in the few ornaments they possess, their appearance is similar to that of the Shoshones.

The comparison between the Flatheads and Shoshones was natural for Lewis to make for two reasons. First, they had visited the Shoshones less than two weeks before, and had stayed several days out of consideration for their guide Sacajawea. She had been captured by Eastern tribes when young, and this visit marked her first return to the tribe of her birth. The additional time without journeying meant more detailed journal entries, so the Shoshone habits and dress were recorded well. Many similarities between the tribes did exist because there

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<sup>1</sup>Meriwether Lewis, History of the Expedition of Lewis and Clark, edited by Elliott Coues, Vol. II, p. 581.

was trade between the two tribes on occasion. The Shoshones are credited, for example, with the introduction of horses to the Northern tribes.

In 1812, Cox described the Flathead and Kutenai Indians, and their clothing, by writing:<sup>1</sup>

Both sexes are comparatively very fair, and their complexions are a shade lighter than the palest new copper after being freshly rubbed. They are remarkably well-made, rather slender, and never corpulent. The dress of the men consists solely of long leggings, called mittasses by the Canadians, which reach from the ankles to the hips, and are fastened by strings to a leathern belt round the waist, and a shirt of dressed deer-skin, with loose hanging sleeves, which fall down to their knees. The outside seams of the leggings and shirt sleeves have fringes of leather. The women are covered by a loose robe of the same material reaching from the neck to the feet, and ornamented with fringes, beads, hawk-bells, and thimbles. The dresses of both are regularly cleaned with pipe-clay, which abounds in parts of the country; and every individual has two or three changes. They have no permanent covering for the head, but in wet or stormy weather shelter it by part of a buffalo robe, which completely answers all the purposes of a surtout.

As Cox wrote, the basic parts of the man's costume were several, consisting of a long skin shirt, leggings, breech clout and moccasins, as well as an outer robe and other parts on occasion. Of these, the breech or loin cloth was the only piece of clothing that was always worn. It consisted of a rectangle of hide strung from a thong around the waist. The shirt was worn over this and extended to mid-thigh in length. It was made like the woman's dress in pattern. The sleeves were stitched together and the sides were laced with thongs. The shirt usually fitted more closely to the body than did the women's dresses. It, too, was tied or belted around the waist. Decorated

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<sup>1</sup> Ross Cox, Adventures on the Columbia River, Vol. I, p. 240.

sleeve bands might run from neck to wrist, but they were not used often. There were also shoulder bands which were quite common, and ran over the shoulder from the front waist to the back. In appearance these are similar to suspenders. Since the decorated bands were sometimes used to cover seams, they continued to be worn after the sleeves were put on the hide, and no longer just a square continuation of the skin. This change in style to having set-in sleeves occurred after the Indians had closely observed the sleeves on the white men's clothes. To see the difference this made, refer to Plate XII, Fig. 1 and 2.

The buckskin shirts were discarded for everyday wear after the Indians could obtain cotton shirts. They wore these with the tail out and neck open. The brighter the color, the more appeal the shirt possessed. Around the sleeves of these shirts the men wore beaded arm bands. The placement of the armlets was usually slightly above the elbow and they acted rather like elastic sleeve garters in holding the fullness of the sleeve in the upper arm area.

Leggings were sometimes worn and sometimes not. They were always worn in winter, for ceremonial occasions, and when they would not interfere with physical activities. The leggings were a tubular, tapered piece of buckskin extending in length from the ankle to mid-thigh or above. There was a thong attached to the top which in turn could be tied to the thong around the waist. The bottom, around the ankle, was laced together for a snug fit and freedom in putting the leggings on and taking them off. Flathead leggings of buckskin were decorated in several ways. This decoration could consist of fringe,

#### EXPLANATION OF PLATE XI

- Fig. 1. Chief Martin Charlo wearing his cotton shirt, wampum necklace, headdress and Hudson Bay blanket. McKay photo.
- Fig. 2. Cotton shirt worn with vest, arm bands, gauntlet gloves, tail piece and full headdress. This could be a ceremonial or dance costume. McKay photo.



PLATE XI



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XII

- Fig. 1. Man's old-style poncho shirt with sleeves a straight continuation from the shoulder.
- Fig. 2. Man's shirt pattern showing white influence with set-in sleeves tapering towards the wrists.

## PLATE XII

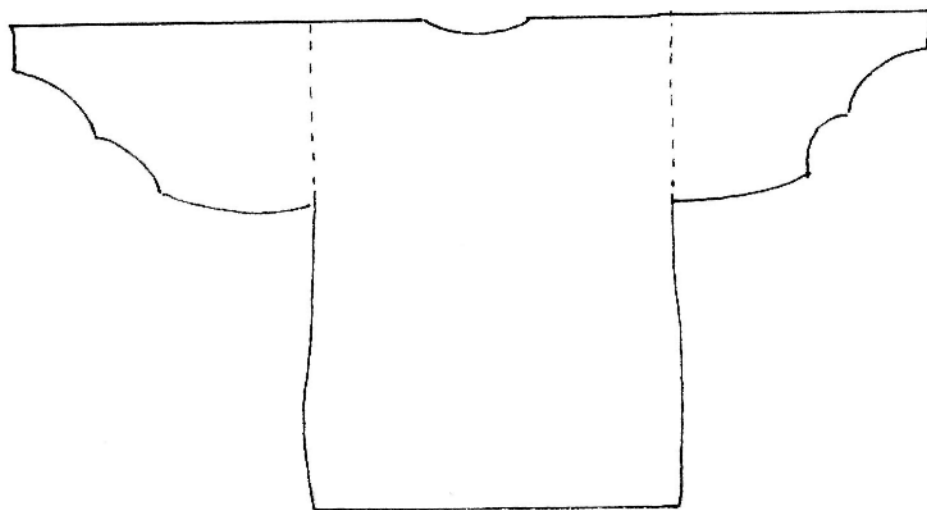


Fig. 1.

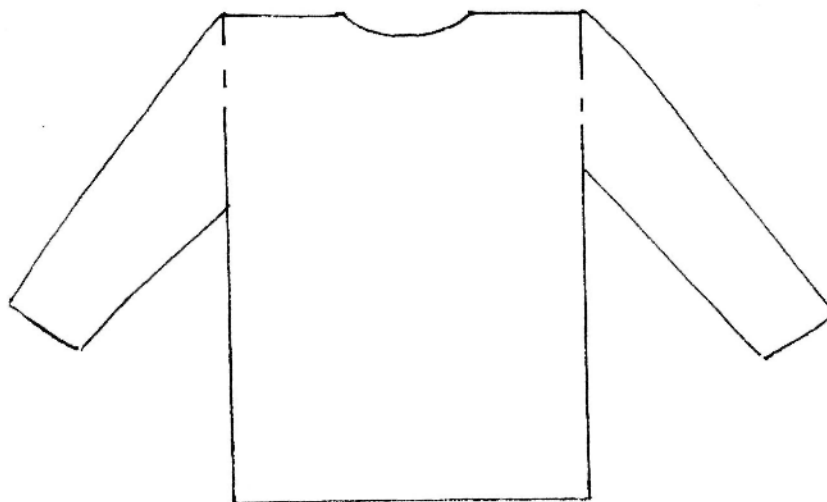


Fig. 2.

beaded or quill embroidered panels, or a fringe made out of numerous weazel or wild ermine tails. Plate XIII shows a single legging for a man decorated with tails and beaded band. A Kutenai man's leggings were simply trimmed with quantities of fringe. He would remove these when hunting to prevent the fringe catching on trees or underbrush.

After the Indians had fairly easy access to blankets, they made their leggings from the heavy wool material which came in a variety of plain, bright hues. These blankets were the "Hudson Bay" type with wide stripes and fringed ends. Plate XIV shows how these blanket cloth leggings were designed. The blanket stripes were always at the top where they did not show. There was often an added beaded piece which was at the ankle and added a decorative note. Unlike the arm band which could be removed easily, the ankle decoration was stitched to the leggings.

The blankets were later made into "Indian coats" which were long, ankle length coats with wide lapels and collars. They gave a cape-like effect similar to the original robes of hide finished with the fur attached. These robes had been made from heavy hides such as buffalo or mountain sheep skin.

Foot coverings were one of the most vital items of clothing. They not only offered protection from the elements, and padding against stones and briars, but also insulation against the noise of movement as the man tracked down game or an enemy. Wissler<sup>1</sup> ascribes one-seam moccasins to Plateau or Forest Indians, which would appear

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<sup>1</sup>Clark Wissler, Distribution of Moccasin decoration among the Plains Tribes, p. 85.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIII

Man's buckskin legging with beaded side band and ermine tail fringe trimming. Photo taken by courtesy of Montana State University Historical Museum.



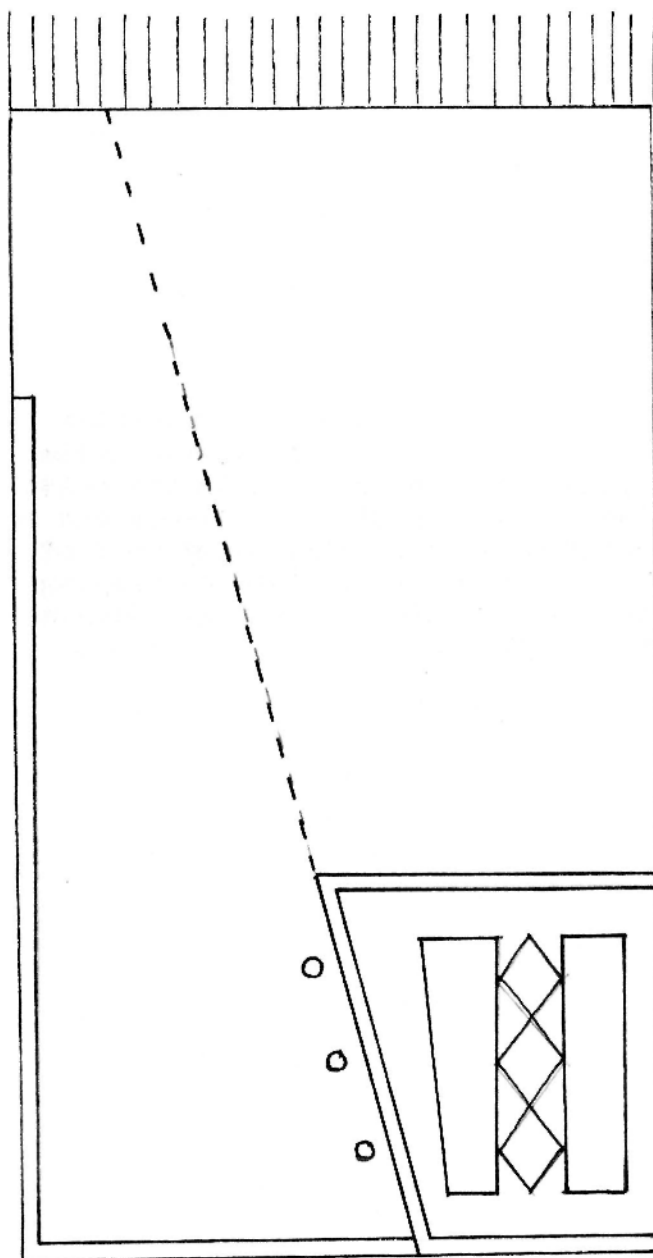
## PLATE XIII



#### EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIV

Pattern of man's legging made from one-quarter of a red Hudson Bay blanket. The area to the left of the dotted line was open and formed a flap. The dotted line is the stitching to the ankle area where it was laced. The fringe was worn at the top. The decoration at the ankle was a cuff of white bead embroidery and blue sateen sewed onto the legging. The band along the edge was also of blue sateen. Original pair of leggings now owned by Mrs. Ethyl Terry of Polson, Montana.

PLATE XIV



to be correct since both Flathead and Kutenai tribes are classified in this way.

The ancient Kutenai moccasin is described by Turney-High thus:<sup>1</sup>

The Kutenai moccasin was distinctive for the simplicity of the design, but (they) will not admit that it was inferior. 'We are a square-toed and square-heeled people.'...

The old Kutenai moccasin was made by laying on the ground a rectangular piece of prepared hide about a third longer and a third wider than the foot it was to accommodate. First, the two foreward corners were folded so that they would lie flat against each other, pointing straight up. They were then sewed into position. This formed the top of the moccasin over the instep. The surplus triangular pieces were cut away. In this way one of the identifying marks on a Kutenai moccasin was made, the seam which ran from the midpoint of the toe straight to the ankle.

The long foreward bunch of surplus hide at the foreward end was next turned inside and under this portion of the instep. The hide was turned inside and under this portion of the instep, cut and the proper amount sewed fast to the top. The surplus was then trimmed away and the shoe turned right side out again.

Next, the rearward projecting flap was bent upward to form the heel, sewed against the rear edges of the backward curving instep top, and the surplus cut away. Two seams, then, ran down each side of the back, so that the Kutenai were a square-heeled as well as a square-toed people. The edges which would go around the wearer's ankles were then trimmed into shape.

An anklet of a particularly soft piece of hide was then sewed into the top. This was a broad, short strip about five inches high. Plenty of room was left for overlap in front, and the anklet provided with strings wherewith to bind it around the ankles, and over the leggings.

The basic Kutenai moccasin, exclusive of the anklet, was thus made of one piece of material. There was no rearward trailer used either as a decoration or to help pull the shoe off, a trait so characteristic of the Plateau peoples.

Men and women wore the same type of moccasin, always undecorated.

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<sup>1</sup>H. H. Turney-High, Ethnography of the Kutenai, p. 91.

They today make a moccasin like the one traditionally made by the Flatheads. This moccasin is also a one-seam moccasin, but one rounded or fitted over the toes. The seam continues around the edge of the foot and there is a short seam up the back of the foot. Trailers, or extensions sewed into the main seam at the base of the heel, aid in pulling the moccasin off. Actually, trailers provided more decoration than fulfilling any purpose. Plate XV shows a flat pattern for such a moccasin. If the moccasin were to be worn on a long journey on foot, a second sole could be stitched around the foot for additional protection. This also increased the wearing qualities. Winter moccasins were finished with the fur on and constructed with the fur side inside.

If any item of clothing was decorated at all, it was the moccasins. The designs were usually geometric, but floral designs were also used after they became prevalent as a decorative motif. Currently, typical beaded designs on moccasins which are made for sale or are worn by the Indians themselves are often based on the old geometric patterns. The designs shown in Plate XVI, Fig. 1 - 3 are typical, as are the color combinations.

The oldest headdress of the men was simply a corner of the robe pulled over the head for protection and warmth. The headdress as a personal means of decoration did not reach the Flathead and Kutenai tribes until after they had come into contact with other tribes, many of them from far away. They seemed to enjoy wearing head-pieces, however, and a variety gradually appeared.

## EXPLANATION OF PLATE XV

- Fig. 1. Flat pattern design for the Flathead one-seam moccasin. Dotted line indicates fold.
- Fig. 2. The outer side of the moccasin showing the seam along the edge as it angles up to the center back heel seam.
- Fig. 3. The inner side showing the start of the seam as it goes around the toes.
- Fig. 4. Fringe sewed on later if desired, changing appearance.
- Fig. 5. Various types of trailers or heel pieces sewed into the seam at the base of the heel.
-



## PLATE XV

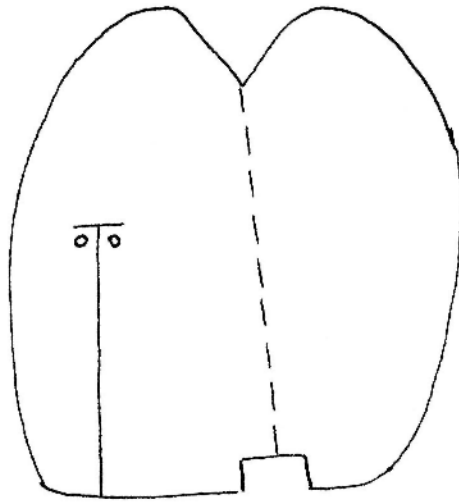


Fig. 1.

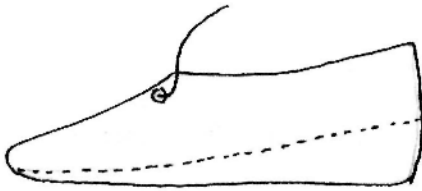


Fig. 2.

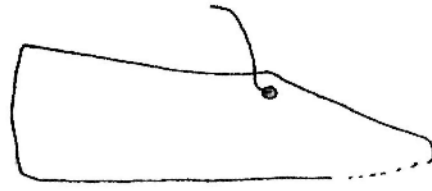


Fig. 3.

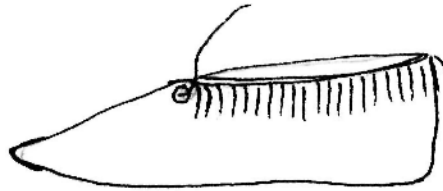


Fig. 4.

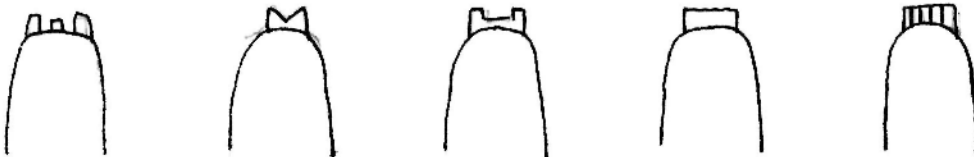


Fig. 5.

# EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVI

Fig. 1. Typical colors and design from a recent Kutenai moccasin.

Figs.

2-3. Other variations of the diamond design, most frequently used of all Kutenai patterns for decoration.

## PLATE XVI

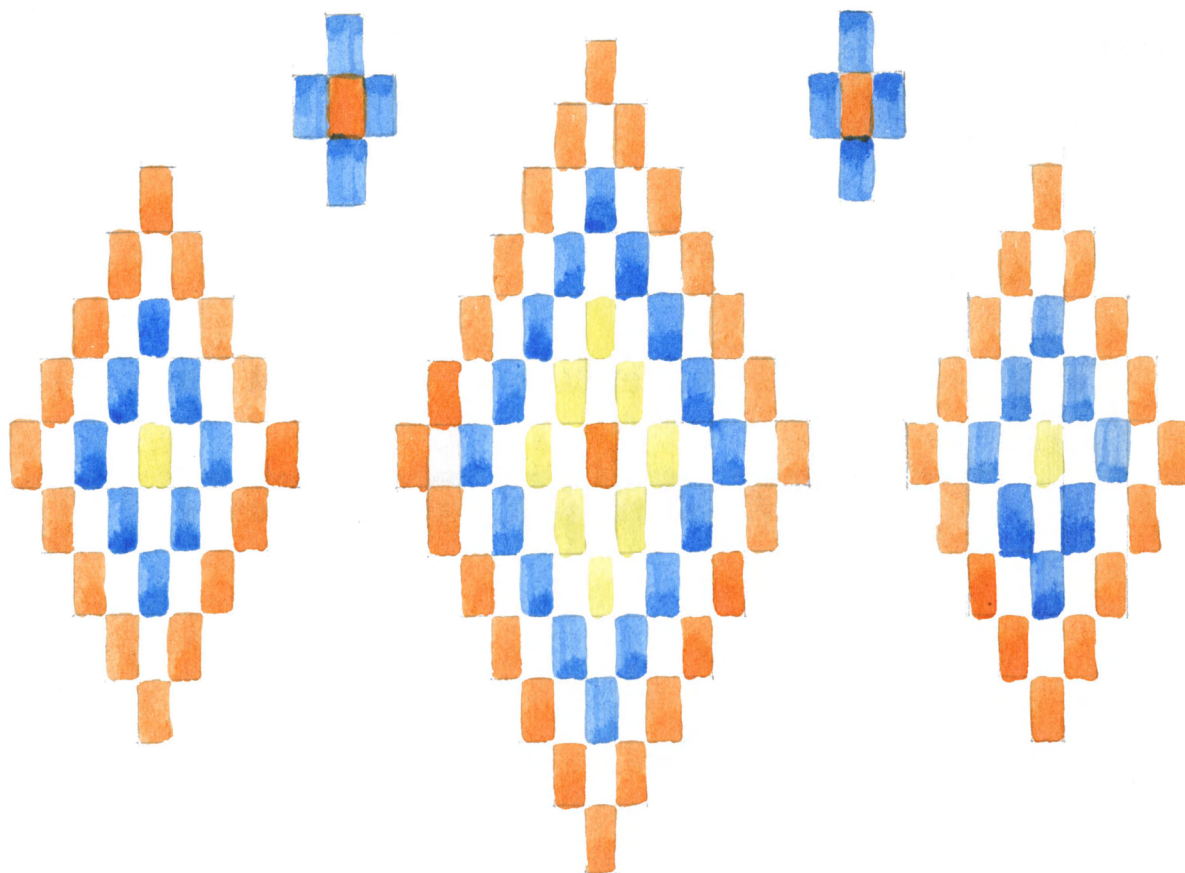


Fig. 1.

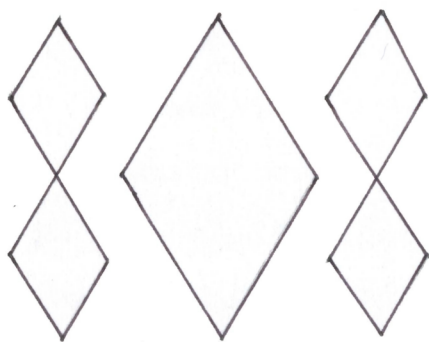


Fig. 2.

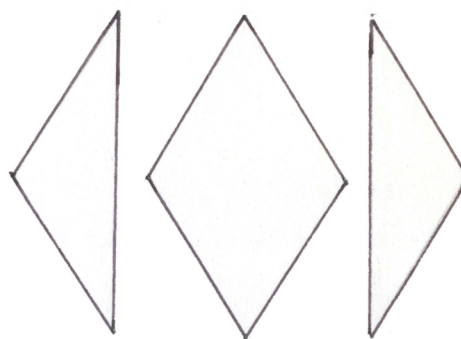


Fig. 3.

When a man did a particularly honorable deed of bravery, usually against the enemy, he was allowed to "count coup". That is, he could count his deed as an honor to be told at ceremonials; he could notch his coup stick with a notch for each "coup"; he could symbolize the event by painting on his teepee if he desired. In addition, a Flathead youth who counted coup could claim a bride without consulting her parents, by tapping her on the shoulder with his coup stick. If she did not move it off immediately, she had given her consent to the match. Costume-wise, a man who had counted coup could wear an eagle feather. If he had engaged in a long war and counted coup there, as well, he could wear two eagle feathers. The eagle was symbolic of qualities the Indians admired and desired to possess: keen eyesight, swiftness, and great strength.

The war bonnet, composed of many eagle feathers, while worn in later years, was of Sioux origin. It is typical of an Indian design which has been cultivated to attract white people to the pow-wows. This many-feathered bonnet was usually attached to the deep crown of a hat from which the brim had been removed. The feathers were attached to a band which in turn ran around the base of the hat in front. Gradually towards the back the feathers fall down or droop to form the bush "fall" of feathers associated with Indian chiefs.

Hats in general received quick acceptance as soon as they were introduced. When Lieutenant Mullan came through the Flathead area in 1854 surveying the first transcontinental road for the government, one of his men did a number of sketches of the Indians. This man, Private Sohon, was a German who also served as interpreter for the Indians.

The sketches show most of the Salish and Pend d'Oreille men wearing their hair loose and cut across the forehead in a "bang" or forelock. The hat worn commonly, to judge from the pictures,<sup>1</sup> was the basque beret such as is still worn by French sailors. It had a pom-pom on top and was worn at a variety of angles. Presumably the Indians had obtained these hats from some of the French trappers and guides who had come through the area.

Later both the Flatheads and Kutenai wore the big cowboy type felt hat with a deep crown and wide brim. They creased the hat with four creases so it came to a point. Their coup feathers were stuck in the hat band.

Men had many more accessories than did women. Like the women they had necklaces of elk teeth and wampum, sea-snails, and haiqua. They also had necklaces made from small bones such as from the legs of the blue grouse. If he were a particularly brave man, he might have a necklace made from eagle talons or bear claws taken from the bird or animal after he had killed it. Both involved great danger because of the primitive weapons available to use and the strength of the adversary. After the claws were obtained, they had to be boiled in water for many hours, perhaps several days, in order to make them soft enough to pierce with the hard bone awls. Once pierced and again dry and hard, they were strung on thongs with trade or bone beads. Plate XVII shows a bear claw necklace with blue and brass

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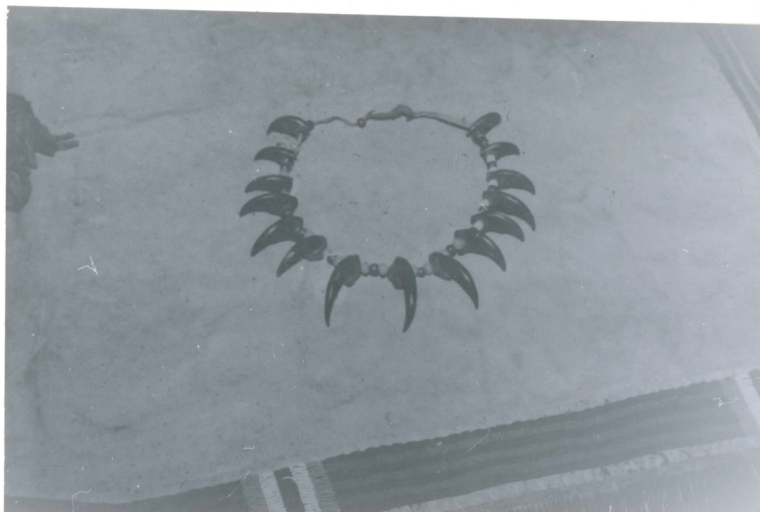
<sup>1</sup>John C Ewers, Gustavus Sohon's Portraits of Flathead and Pend d'Oreille Indians, Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, Vol. 110, No. 7, Nov. 26, 1948.

**EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVII**

**Necklace made from bear claws. Photo taken through the  
courtesy of Montana State University Historical Museum.**



## PLATE XVII



trade beads strung between the claws.

Sometimes the strings of wampum would have a pendant attached. This was sometimes claws, but more often it was a particularly iridescent mussel or clam shell. The shells were shaped into a round or oval, and occasionally the edge was serrated.

In addition to these necklaces, a man usually wore a thong around his neck from which was suspended a small bag containing his "medicine". This medicine consisted of a few things collected during his life span which had symbolic significance for the individual. This little bag was the most personal and precious of all his belongings. For example, when the baby's umbilical cord dried and fell off, the mother took this and put it in the little bag for her son. The bag was attached to the papoose carrier and was never far from the child at any time. When he was old enough to have other experiences which the Indians classed as vital, souvenirs of these were added to the bag. It carried luck for the person whose it was, and no other. Therefore, it was buried with its owner when he died.

In the early and mid-1800's there were several Indians from tribes in the eastern United States, Iroquois and Delaware, who came to the West with the fur traders. They made the Flathead tribe theirs, and lived out their days with their adopted tribesmen. Customs from the Iroquois and Delaware Indians in their midst were in turn adopted by the Salish. A particularly striking piece of clothing was the neck ruff worn by the Delawares. This was the neck ruff of fur cut from the neck of a bull elk. It was worn around the neck and fastened with thong ties.

Belts were often worn over their shirts by the men, but they were as often not worn. Men's belts were wider than those of the women, and they had no long tails. Since the belts were wider, there was more room for design. Often there was a margin of blue beading on each side of the center panel of design. This margin was frequently stitched so that the beads appeared to be on the bias. Blue was the favorite color for this bias band. Again, the lazy-stitch was used to apply the beads to the very heavy leather belts; nailheads were also used for decoration. If the belt were buckleless, then it tied neatly with thongs.

In later years, in times of money, the man would carry his change or money purse hooked over the belt. This purse was frequently one of straw woven by the Nez Perce Indians. It was a double purse or folded purse which creased in the center over the belt. To open it, the purse was removed from the belt and spread apart to show the two end compartments, open in the fold, similar to modern billfolds.

In addition to these folded containers, there were older styles of bags and functions for them. Some of them were the bags for peace pipes which were often fringed and decorated. There were bags to hold colored clays for decoration, and bags to hold the tools for making arrow points. The peace pipe bags were the ones most decorated. They might be four to seven or eight inches across and perhaps ten to fifteen inches long in the bag proper, with that much length of fringe on the bottom of the bag. Both the fringe and bag might be decorated. The former would be wrapped with quills in such a fashion as to form a design. The latter might have a wide band of solid bead embroidery

or quill decoration. The two sides of the bag were always different since bad luck was associated with repetition of front and back designs. In a sense, there was no front or back, since both sides were decorated with equal care.

Mittens were made and worn by both men and women in winter. They were of a simple, sack-like shape, rounded to fit the fingers, with the only projection being for the thumb. They were frequently made of hide with the fur attached. Later, after the gloves of the white men attracted their notice, the Indians made regular gauntlet gloves of buckskin. The cuff was often decorated with beads, and floral designs seem to have been most used.

Men used cosmetics in that they used color on their skins upon occasion. These colors were various clays which had been mixed with fish oil or animal fat such as bear grease before being applied to the skin. The clay was dry and powder-like as it was carried in their pouches or bags. There were shades of red and yellow clay, as well as white, and one which was somewhat purplish. Charcoal was used for the black elements of decoration.

#### CHILDREN'S CLOTHING

Children's clothing for the most part was a reproduction of the adult's, on a smaller scale. Till the child was several years old it went naked in good weather and wore clothing solely when it was needed for protection. During the child's pre-ambulatory life it was confined most of the day in a cradle-board or papoose carrier,

although at night or while in the teepee, the child had freedom of movement. The Indians say the carriers were not used till they had horses, because ease of carrying a child was no object till that time. Once adopted, however, the cradle-board was used quite consistently. The mother could place the board and child on a lodge pole or a tree limb and it would be safe from harm by animals. When the mother moved on foot or horseback, the board was carried on her back. The board was filled with soft moss and skunk cabbage leaves which protected the board, served as diapers, and were easily replaced. The decoration of the carrier could require much labor because it could be one of the largest areas for decoration at any time, or the papoose board could be very simple with little decoration. Plate XVIII, Fig. 1 and 2, show Salish and Kutenai cradle-boards made between 1890 and 1905. If a child died, his cradle-board was never used again, and so it was destroyed or given to someone who would never have a use for it.

The Indians believed that the cradle-boards were a great aid to good posture. The child certainly was tightly wrapped in an erect and straight position. Even at present, young Indian mothers who no longer use a papoose carrier, bind their babies tightly in receiving blankets, with their legs straight and arms crossed. The babies do not seem to mind, although they are bound securely. Once a child was able to move upright under his own power, he was no longer confined to the cradle-board. Plate XIX shows the basic structure of such a board.

Before the child was born, certain tabus affected both of the prospective parents. The clothing tabus were centered on anything

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVIII

Fig. 1. Salish baby carrier made of beaded embroidery on buckskin.

Fig. 2. Kutenai baby carrier made of beaded embroidery on buckskin and wool flannel.  
The upper part is beaded; the lower is on fabric.

Both pictures taken by courtesy of Montana State University Historical  
Museum.



PLATE XVIII



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

#### EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIX

- Fig. 1. Flathead papoose carrier board. The width is usually about 14-1/2 inches at the widest point; the length is about 36 inches. The four holes indicate the placement of the lacing holes for the thongs which tied the board to the mother's back.
- Fig. 2. The board cover for the same carrier. The hole in the middle part is for the child bag and the back pad of fur.
- Fig. 3. The decorative cover which goes over the child bag (a simple sac-like bag), and the board cover. The bottom half of the decorative cover is readily removed to unlace the child bag and remove the infant.
- Fig. 4. A Kutenai child board made from one piece of hide stretched over the board. It was laced tight across the back of the board, and the front flaps were laced to allow the child to be put in and out. Decorative covers were not used until later when they came into much contact with the Flatheads.

## PLATE XIX

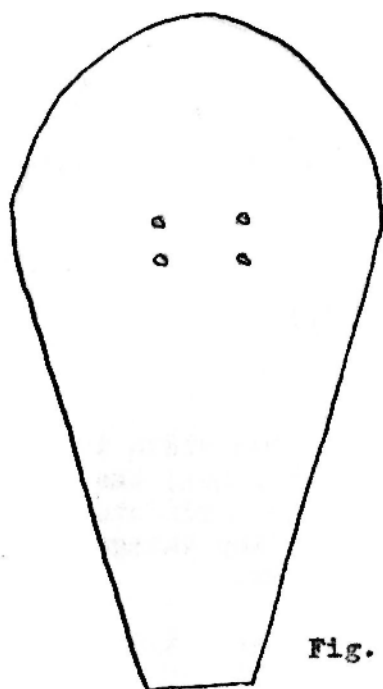


Fig. 1.

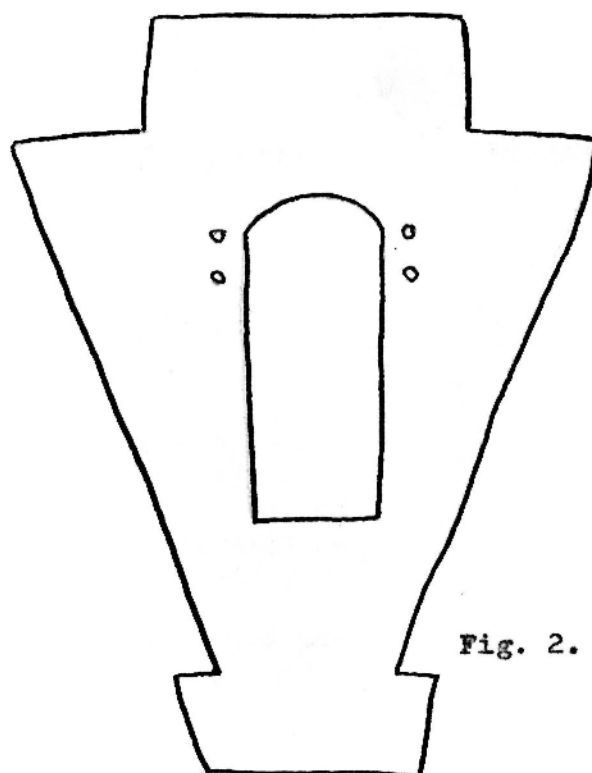


Fig. 2.

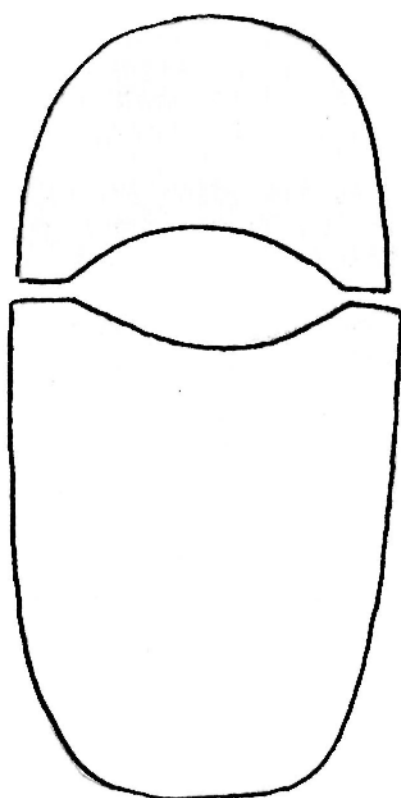


Fig. 3.

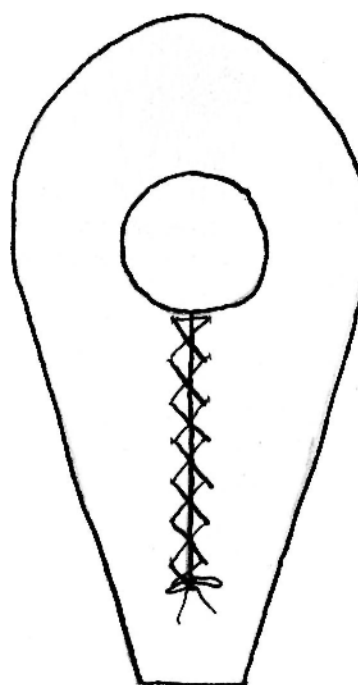


Fig. 4.

worn around the neck. The Flathead Indians believed that if the prospective parent wore anything around their necks, then the baby's umbilical cord would wrap itself around the neck and would strangle it at birth. Other tabus concerned food.

### SPECIAL COSTUMES

Every tribe had individuals in it who were considered to be endowed with supernatural powers. These people were known as shamens and were "medicine men", or "medicine women". Ordinarily they were not distinguished by any special dress. However, on occasions when there was need for their particular powers, they wore special head coverings and decorated their bodies. These decorations might be representational of their powers or what they were endeavoring to do. A common type of head covering was a fitted cap of black mink, martin, or otter fur, with spots of white fur attached all over the cap. To this cap was attached a pair of horns, generally from a bison. The tail of fur from the mink or otter hung down the back and might be compared to a pigtail in appearance. To this were attached such items as eagle, woodpecker, or other feathers which had mystical powers for them; stones, the turquoise for example, which were rare in that area of the country; little bells, strands of human hair, and sometimes, ermine tails.

A chief was not entitled to wear anything extraordinary because of his position. However, a Flathead chief carried a whip as a symbol of his authority. He did not use the whip as a ready punishment, but

only if a person was guilty by his own admission. Nevertheless, the whip was definitely the symbol of the chief's position.

The Kutenai men in pre-horse eras had an armor which was worn by them in all their battles. After horses came to be ridden extensively, the armor became obsolete because it was too stiff and awkward to wear on horseback. Turney-High<sup>1</sup> reports this armor fully:

It was of the rod type, and was made from the dogbane or ocean spray.

Sticks of about a half centimeter's diameter were cut and seasoned. The length, of course, depended on the height of the wearer. The proper number of sticks was laid parallel in a row and tightly bound at their upper and lower end with dogbane bark. They were then given many rows of such bark bindings between the upper and lower ends. The more of these, the tighter the cuirass. The rows of binding should be at least three inches apart, while a two-inch spacing was thought much better. If they were far apart, an arrow point could easily pierce the wearer between the rods of his cuirass.

In this way a square of bound *apocynum cannabinum* rods was first (p. 87) made to form that element of the cuirass which would protect the chest. The square was modified by cutting a semi-circle from the middle of the top rod to accommodate the neck, while similar cuts were made at the top corners so that the mail would fit under the arms and come to the mid-point of the sides. A back piece was made to correspond to the breast. When worn, the two were lashed together at the sides. Strings of raw-hide alone connecting the chest and back elements of the mail at the shoulders. The tops of the shoulders were without protection, but the front, sides, and back were completely covered.

Sleeves were similarly made to cover the upper arm. The lower arms were unprotected. The sleeves were flat pieces of rod mail lashed together under the arms and equipped with strings to make fast to the lashings of the cuirass.

The length of the cuirass was as great as possible, but short enough to allow the warrior to bend his legs.

Leggings, or greaves, were likewise made to cover the upper legs. The lower leg was left unprotected. No helmet was known.

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<sup>1</sup>H. H. Turney-High, Ethnography of the Kutenai, p. 86-87.

## DANCE COSTUMES

In the "olden times" when the Indians had not yet been influenced by outside sources, the occasion for a pleasure dance called for "best clothes" to be worn because it was a joyful time of celebration. Dances held as a preliminary measure before going into hunt or battle were danced solely by the men. At these dances they usually wore a breech clout, moccasins, and necklaces, and carried or wore something which would shake to help create the rhythm while they danced. Later, after spectators and tourists were solicited by the dancers, more clothing was added. It might be said that the more commercial the dances became, the more clothing worn. During the transition period between tribal ritual and public entertainment, they came into contact with a number of tribes. A number of articles were acquired from them.

The Indians became fond of wearing vests. These were made like any man's suit vest, without its pockets. The front pieces, or sections, of the vest were decorated with solid bead embroidery. The motifs ranged from floral designs to individually significant designs. The latter might include a picture of an animal or bird whose characteristics the Indian desired to emulate. Or the animal or bird might symbolize a certain experience or event. Modern day adaptations of the commemorative type of design on a vest can be typified by the following example. A young Indian proved himself to be an exceptional athlete in the activities of his high school. He was rightfully proud of his attainments, and recorded the school's name and the dates of his achievements in a large star on the front of his vest. The

outlines of the star were in the school team's colors.

A thigh decoration piece which resembled a neck tie in shape and size, was originally worn by tying it to a thong which was looped under the surface flesh of the thigh. Today this is still worn hanging down the side of the thigh, but connected to the bottom of swimming trunks or shorts. Both trunks and shorts have taken the place of the loin cloth. Even ground-length, decorated loin cloths are worn over the trunks or shorts. Some Indians have gone further and wear long underwear dyed in various hues, or even professional ballet leotards under the rest of their dance paraphenalia.

The long loin-type pieces mentioned above are tied about the waist and their decoration is frequently bead embroidery or feathers. The material used is generally a heavy smooth fabric, such as a wool flannel. Besides these, there are also tail pieces which are attached around the waist and hang over the buttocks. These tail pieces quiver and shake while the dancers move about. These were, in earlier times, made from pheasant or long wild bird feathers attached to a buckskin covered disc of wood. Sometimes the feathers were attached to form a circle, and other times the feathers stuck out away from the body. These simple feather pieces in gay colors have become similar to those worn by the Hopi Indians of the Southwest. Feather circles attached to each upper arm are also from the Southwest style. The feathers are no longer from native birds, but are fuzzy, ostrich-like feathers in many bright colors purchased from the novelty supply houses. Occasionally, the Indians have taken care to use the colors in their symbolic design by choosing school colors, or even the national red,



EXPLANATION OF PLATE XX

**Figs.1-2.** Dancers of the Flathead Reservation in dance regalia.  
Photos taken in the mid-1930's at Ronan, Montana,  
by Eckley Studio.

## PLATE XX



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

white, and blue to be worn by ex-members of the armed forces who have distinguished themselves.

Another southwest Indian costume which is worn by some Indians is the headpiece. This consists of a beaded band around the head, two beaded side pieces hanging down in front of the ears, and a round decorated circle where the two are joined together.

The most prevalent dance headdress among those on the Flathead reservation is the roach. This was introduced by the Iroquois Indians. The "roach" was made of porcupine hair which is rather bristly, and hair from a deer or elk. These were dyed different colors and sewed on to a base of rope. The rope, preferably cotton, was anchored together with string as it was shaped into a long oval. To this was attached the strips of hair with the longer porcupine hair in the middle and the shorter, bushier deer hair along each side. The finished product was long enough to reach from the forehead over the head to the shoulder line in back. It was tied on with a thong which fastened under the chin or at the nape of the neck.

The Sioux type of war bonnet, no longer made of authentic eagle feathers, has become more popular since it is what the audience expects to see (Plate XXI).

Foot covering for the dancers were moccasins. These, being for a special occasion, were decorated. Around the top of the moccasins and continuing up the leg, strands of bells were worn. These bells were not the little bells used to decorate their garments, but were larger bells, even to the size of sleigh bells. A variety of size was considered desirable since it provided variety of sound as well.

#### EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXI

- Fig. 1. Dancers at a Pow-wow on July 4, 1956. at Arlee, Montana. Notice vest with stars worn by athlete, at the left; the tie-shaped thigh pieces worn by boy and man dancers; the tail piece and shoulder piece showing Hopi influence; and the man in buckskin on the right with the sleeve bands of blue bead embroidery.
- Fig. 2. Dancers at the same Pow-wow. Notice long loin cloth worn under tail piece on the dancer at the left.

## PLATE XXI



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

Sometimes there would be an additional trailer attached to the ankle. An example of this is a skunk tail, allowed to drag the ground.

The Indians realized the importance of having the arms make purposeful gestures during the dance, instead of dangling limply at their sides. To do this they carried objects such as a shaker made from deer hooves, or a feathered wing piece from a bird, or a pole decorated with feathers, or pieces of hair simulating scalps. If the piece made noise or created a rhythmic pattern of movement it seemed acceptable to carry it.

Dance costumes were characterized by their variety and individuality, by the amount of body covering, and by their color and authenticity.

#### DIFFUSIONARY INFLUENCES ON COSTUME

There are three influences which are displayed in the clothing worn by Flathead and Kutenai Indians on their reservation today. The first shows a fusion of the costumes of many tribes of Indians. The most obvious combination came from the consolidation of the two tribes on one reservation. The Salish had already adopted several styles from the Delaware and Iroquois who lived with their group.

In recent years inter-tribal conferences and celebrations have further fused costume patterns. The first of such tribal conferences occurred on a state-wide level with many of their former enemies who were Plains Indians. From them the Western Indians obtained and exchanged design motifs for decoration. In national celebrations and gatherings they exchanged dances and ideas, and it is to these



meetings that many Southwestern costumes can be traced. Many of the more culture-conscious Indians have traveled widely, attending college in other states and visiting other tribes. They, too, have returned with costume variations.

The second combination is the necessary change from Indian ways to those of the white men. Since these tribes were anxious to become assimilated, the change has been rapid and is almost complete. What began with wearing French berets continued through the acquisition of cloth and trimmings, to wearing clothing identical with that worn by white people around them. The movies set a pattern for what the Indian should look like on "state" occasions, and the tourists who now subsidize the dances demand to see them. Naturally the Indians have obliged.

The last union has been that uniting the new customs with the old Indian ones. The older Indians who can still remember when their life was not restricted to a reservation and can remember when the young people revered the old for their wisdom and experience, have continued to dress as they deemed appropriate and comfortable. These older natives have worn a combination of white and Indian-type garb all their lives. At tribal celebrations they still wear clothing which is appropriate according to what they learned when they were young. For instance, an old man would wear his blanket leggings and bright shirt to dance, avoiding the use of feathers from a novelty supply house. The women retain the use of shawls and kerchiefs, even though they wear jersey dresses and modern designs.



The one costume piece which has continued its popularity with all ages is the moccasin. True, it is worn with socks or hose, and in rainy weather may be covered by rubbers, but it is the costume element which has retained its original material, buckskin, and is currently worn by both young and old.

The new customs which have been adopted are many. For the very young Indians on the reservation there is no difference in dress between themselves and their white companions. Plate XXI, Fig. 2, shows two little Indian girls dressed as they usually are at the time of this writing. Besides new techniques and methods for construction, there are many new fabrics and trims which have been adopted into use by those Indians who appear in pageants and presentations. These are not as vital as the changes which have come about in their homes, and their own beings. For example, rarely does an Indian youth or man allow his hair to grow long, and few are the Indian children who can speak their native tongue. The costume which became modified through influences from other Indians and the white man is becoming a thing of the past just as the old buckskin costume did. In the course of this generation, it is predicted that there will be no more Indian dances and the only reason for maintaining any native costume at all will be gone.

#### SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to record facts concerning the costumes of the Flathead and Kutenai Indian Tribes and to learn the

significance of these costumes to the Indians.

Their original costume was made of buckskin. The women wore a loose poncho style dress with a belt and moccasins. The men wore a loose shirt made like the women's dresses, a loin cloth, leggings, and moccasins. This garb varied somewhat with the season and with the occasion.

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The true native costume as a whole has become a thing of the past. The costumes which remain are a combination of designs. Some of them combine the old traditional designs with the newer fashions worn by the outsiders in their midst, some combine native designs of various Indian tribes, and some combine Indian designs with white men's styles. These latter may be ones introduced by the first traders, but they continue to persist to the present time.

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NATIVE COSTUMES OF THE FLATHEAD AND KUTENAI  
INDIAN TRIBES ON THE FLATHEAD INDIAN RESERVATION  
IN MONTANA

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

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The primary purpose of this study was to record in writing and pictures facts concerning the early costumes of the Flathead and Kutenai Indian tribes, and to learn the significance of these costumes to the Indians. Another purpose was to describe changes that have been made in these costumes up to the present time.

The Flathead and Kutenai Indians are classified as Plateau tribes whose relatively stationary homes are in northwestern Montana. The portion of the Flathead nation studied includes the Salish, Kalispel, and Pend d'Oreille sub-tribes now residing on the Flathead reservation. Of the whole Kutenai nation only the Lower Kutenai band was studied.

The original costume of the Indians was made of buckskin. The women wore a loose poncho style dress with a belt and moccasins. The men wore a loose shirt made like the women's dresses, a loin cloth, leggings, and moccasins. This garb varied somewhat with the season and with the occasion.

There were several differences in the traditional costumes of the two tribes. For example, the basic preparation of skins was similar, but the Flatheads preferred smoked skins and the Kutenai preferred to have the hides white. The Kutenai did not trim their white costumes except with white thong fringe although the Flatheads used many forms of decoration such as porcupine quill embroidery, elk teeth, sea shells, and later, beads and bells. Designs used on the garments were almost always geometric, but occasionally they were symbolic designs that made an attempt at naturalism.

The buckskin costumes ceased to be used when cotton fabrics became plentiful. Cotton was so much easier to work on and the colors had definite appeal. In order to compensate for its lighter weight, the women wore two dresses, one over the other. For a number of years the basic design of women's dresses and men's shirts remained similar, even after they were no longer made of buckskin. The shirts changed first by adding set-in sleeves that tapered to the wrist and hung down the sides of the garment. The women's dress style has changed more slowly, but the original design is gradually being discontinued in favor of ready made dresses.

Moccasins are the only costume piece still made of hand-tanned buckskin. They are worn by both the old and young, and they are frequently made for sale.

Cradle-boards or papoose carriers which held the infant on its mother's back are no longer used. They were vital during the period when horses provided the transportation, but their value has declined as rapidly as the use of horses.

Special costumes such as those for the medicine men or the armor of the Kutenai warriors have almost completely vanished. At their pow-wows or pleasure dances, it is possible to identify many types of costumes from other tribes, as well as to see many unusual combinations of white and Indian garb.

It is predicted that within the next ten years there will be no more of these pow-wows because the young people are not interested in continuing them. Even though they had a relatively simple pattern of civilization, the Indians changed their ways of life slowly,

adopting within the bounds of their native habits many influences from outside sources. Gradually the foreign habits replaced the original ones, till the Indian's life today contains little of the past. No longer are they dependent on a hunting and gathering economy which has strict division of labor and duties among all the tribal members. The traditions and high principles which governed the Flathead and Kutenai nations when they ceded themselves to the United States in 1851 have almost disappeared under the white men's leadership on the reservation. The tribes themselves have steadily diminished because of assimilation and intermarriage with the white people.

The true native costume as a whole has become a thing of the past. The costumes which remain are a combination of designs. Some of them combine the old traditional designs with the newer designs worn by the outsiders in their midst, some combine native designs of various Indian tribes, and some combine Indian designs with white men's styles. These latter may be ones introduced by the first traders, but they continue to persist to the present time.